LAW

1

NEVER OUTSHINE THE MASTER

JUDGMENT

Always make those above you feel comfortably superior. In your desire to please and impress them, do not go too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite—inspire fear and insecurity. Make your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's finance minister in the first years of his reign, was a generous man who loved lavish parties, pretty women, and poetry. He also loved money, for he led an extravagant lifestyle. Fouquet was clever and very much indispensable to the king, so when the prime minister, Jules Mazarin, died, in 1661, the finance minister expected to be named the successor. Instead, the king decided to abolish the position. This and other signs made Fouquet suspect that he was falling out of favor, and so he decided to ingratiate himself with the king by staging the most spectacular party the world had ever seen. The party's ostensible purpose would be to commemorate the completion of Fouquet's château, Vaux-le-Vicomte, but its real function was to pay tribute to the king, the guest of honor.

The most brilliant nobility of Europe and some of the greatest minds of the time—La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld, Madame de Sévigné—attended the party. Molière wrote a play for the occasion, in which he himself was to perform at the evening's conclusion. The party began with a lavish seven-course dinner, featuring foods from the Orient never before tasted in France, as well as new dishes created especially for the night. The meal was accompanied with music commissioned by Fouquet to honor the king.

After dinner there was a promenade through the château's gardens. The grounds and fountains of Vaux-le-Vicomte were to be the inspiration for Versailles.

Fouquet personally accompanied the young king through the geometrically aligned arrangements of shrubbery and flower beds. Arriving at the gardens' canals, they witnessed a fireworks display, which was followed by the performance of Molière's play. The party ran well into the night and everyone agreed it was the most amazing affair they had ever attended.

The next day, Fouquet was arrested by the king's head musketeer, D'Artagnan. Three months later he went on trial for stealing from the country's treasury. (Actually, most of the stealing he was accused of he had done on the king's behalf and with the king's permission.) Fouquet was found guilty and sent to the most isolated prison in France, high in the Pyrenees Mountains, where he spent the last twenty years of his life in solitary confinement.

Interpretation

Louis XIV, the Sun King, was a proud and arrogant man who wanted to be the center of attention at all times; he could not countenance being outdone in lavishness by anyone, and certainly not his finance minister. To succeed Fouquet, Louis chose Jean-Baptiste Colbert, a man famous for his parsimony and for giving the dullest parties in Paris. Colbert made sure that any money liberated from the treasury went straight into Louis's hands. With the money, Louis built a palace even more magnificent than Fouquet's—the glorious palace of Versailles. He used the same architects,

decorators, and garden designer. And at Versailles, Louis hosted parties even more extravagant than the one that cost Fouquet his freedom.

Let us examine the situation. The evening of the party, as Fouquet presented spectacle on spectacle to Louis, each more magnificent than the one before, he imagined the affair as demonstrating his loyalty and devotion to the king. Not only did he think the party would put him back in the king's favor, he thought it would show his good taste, his connections, and his popularity, making him indispensable to the king and demonstrating that he would make an excellent prime minister. Instead, however, each new spectacle, each appreciative smile bestowed by the guests on Fouquet, made it seem to Louis that his own friends and subjects were more charmed by the finance minister than by the king himself, and that Fouquet was actually flaunting his wealth and power. Rather than flattering Louis XIV, Fouquet's elaborate party offended the king's vanity. Louis would not admit this to anyone, of course—instead, he found a convenient excuse to rid himself of a man who had inadvertently made him feel insecure.

Such is the fate, in some form or other, of all those who unbalance the master's sense of self, poke holes in his vanity, or make him doubt his preeminence.

When the evening began, Fouquet was at the top of the world.
By the time it had ended, he was at the bottom.
Voltaire, 1694–1778

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In the early 1600s, the Italian astronomer and mathematician Galileo found himself in a precarious position. He depended on the generosity of great rulers to support his research, and so, like all Renaissance scientists, he would sometimes make gifts of his inventions and discoveries to the leading patrons of the time. Once, for instance, he presented a military compass he had invented to the Duke of Gonzaga. Then he dedicated a book explaining the use of the compass to the Medicis. Both rulers were grateful, and through them Galileo was able to find more students to teach. No matter how great the discovery, however, his patrons usually paid him with gifts, not cash. This made for a life of constant insecurity and dependence. There must be an easier way, he thought.

Galileo hit on a new strategy in 1610, when he discovered the moons of Jupiter. Instead of dividing the discovery among his patrons—giving one the telescope he had used, dedicating a book to another, and so on—as he had done in the past, he decided to focus exclusively on the Medicis. He chose the Medicis for one reason: Shortly after Cosimo I had established the Medici dynasty, in 1540, he had made Jupiter, the mightiest of the gods, the Medici symbol—a symbol of a power that went beyond politics and banking, one linked to ancient Rome and its divinities.

Galileo turned his discovery of Jupiter's moons into a cosmic event

honoring the Medicis' greatness. Shortly after the discovery, he announced that "the bright stars [the moons of Jupiter] offered themselves in the heavens" to his telescope at the same time as Cosimo II's enthronement. He said that the number of the moons—four—harmonized with the number of the Medicis (Cosimo II had three brothers) and that the moons orbited Jupiter as these four sons revolved around Cosimo I, the dynasty's founder. More than coincidence, this showed that the heavens themselves reflected the ascendancy of the Medici family. After he dedicated the discovery to the Medicis, Galileo commissioned an emblem representing Jupiter sitting on a cloud with the four stars circling about him, and presented this to Cosimo II as a symbol of his link to the stars.

In 1610 Cosimo II made Galileo his official court philosopher and mathematician, with a full salary. For a scientist this was the coup of a lifetime. The days of begging for patronage were over.

Interpretation

In one stroke, Galileo gained more with his new strategy than he had in years of begging. The reason is simple: All masters want to appear more brilliant than other people.

They do not care about science or empirical truth or the latest invention; they care about their name and their glory. Galileo gave the Medicis infinitely more glory by linking their name with cosmic forces than he had by making them the patrons of some new scientific gadget or discovery.

Scientists are not spared the vagaries of court life and patronage. They too must serve masters who hold the purse strings. And their great intellectual powers can make the master feel insecure, as if he were only there to supply the funds—an ugly, ignoble job. The producer of a great work wants to feel he is more than just the provider of the financing. He wants to appear creative and powerful, and also more important than the work produced in his name. Instead of insecurity you must give him glory. Galileo did not challenge the intellectual authority of the Medicis with his discovery, or make them feel inferior in any way; by literally aligning them with the stars, he made them shine brilliantly among the courts of Italy. He did not outshine the master, he made the master outshine all others.

KEYS TO POWER

Everyone has insecurities. When you show yourself in the world and display your talents, you naturally stir up all kinds of resentment, envy, and other manifestations of insecurity. This is to be expected. You cannot spend your life worrying about the petty feelings of others. With those above you, however, you must take a different approach: When it comes to power, outshining the master is perhaps the worst mistake of all.

Do not fool yourself into thinking that life has changed much since the days of Louis XIV and the Medicis. Those who attain high standing in life are like kings and queens: They want to feel secure in their positions, and

superior to those around them in intelligence, wit, and charm. It is a deadly but common misperception to believe that by displaying and vaunting your gifts and talents, you are winning the master's affection. He may feign appreciation, but at his first opportunity he will replace you with someone less intelligent, less attractive, less threatening, just as Louis XIV replaced the sparkling Fouquet with the bland Colbert. And as with Louis, he will not admit the truth, but will find an excuse to rid himself of your presence.

This Law involves two rules that you must realize. First, you can inadvertently outshine a master simply by being yourself. There are masters who are more insecure than others, monstrously insecure; you may naturally outshine them by your charm and grace.

No one had more natural talents than Astorre Manfredi, prince of Faenza. The most handsome of all the young princes of Italy, he captivated his subjects with his generosity and open spirit.

In the year 1500, Cesare Borgia laid siege to Faenza. When the city surrendered, the citizens expected the worst from the cruel Borgia, who, however, decided to spare the town: He simply occupied its fortress, executed none of its citizens, and allowed Prince Manfredi, eighteen at the time, to remain with his court, in complete freedom.

A few weeks later, though, soldiers hauled Astorre Manfredi away to a Roman prison. A year after that, his body was fished out of the River Tiber, a stone tied around his neck. Borgia justified the horrible deed with some sort of trumped-up charge of treason and conspiracy, but the real problem was that he was notoriously vain and insecure. The young man was outshining him without even trying. Given Manfredi's natural talents, the prince's mere presence made Borgia seem less attractive and charismatic. The lesson is simple: If you cannot help being charming and superior, you must learn to avoid such monsters of vanity. Either that, or find a way to mute your good qualities when in the company of a Cesare Borgia.

Second, never imagine that because the master loves you, you can do anything you want. Entire books could be written about favorites who fell out of favor by taking their status for granted, for daring to outshine. In late-sixteenth-century Japan, the favorite of Emperor Hideyoshi was a man called Sen no Rikyu. The premier artist of the tea ceremony, which had become an obsession with the nobility, he was one of Hideyoshi's most trusted advisers, had his own apartment in the palace, and was honored throughout Japan. Yet in 1591, Hideyoshi had him arrested and sentenced to death. Rikyu took his own life, instead. The cause for his sudden change of fortune was discovered later: It seems that Rikyu, former peasant and later court favorite, had had a wooden statue made of himself wearing sandals (a sign of nobility) and posing loftily. He had had this statue placed in the most important temple inside the palace gates, in clear sight of the royalty who often would pass by. To Hideyoshi this signified that Rikyu had no sense of limits. Presuming that he had the same rights as those of the highest nobility, he had forgotten that his position depended on the emperor, and had come to believe that he had earned it on his own. This was

an unforgivable miscalculation of his own importance and he paid for it with his life. Remember the following: Never take your position for granted and never let any favors you receive go to your head.

Knowing the dangers of outshining your master, you can turn this Law to your advantage. First you must flatter and puff up your master. Overt flattery can be effective but has its limits; it is too direct and obvious, and looks bad to other courtiers. Discreet flattery is much more powerful. If you are more intelligent than your master, for example, seem the opposite: Make him appear more intelligent than you. Act naive. Make it seem that you need his expertise. Commit harmless mistakes that will not hurt you in the long run but will give you the chance to ask for his help. Masters adore such requests. A master who cannot bestow on you the gifts of his experience may direct rancor and ill will at you instead.

If your ideas are more creative than your master's, ascribe them to him, in as public a manner as possible. Make it clear that *your* advice is merely an echo of *his* advice.

If you surpass your master in wit, it is okay to play the role of the court jester, but do not make him appear cold and surly by comparison. Tone down your humor if necessary, and find ways to make him seem the dispenser of amusement and good cheer. If you are naturally more sociable and generous than your master, be careful not to be the cloud that blocks his radiance from others. He must appear as the sun around which everyone revolves, radiating power and brilliance, the center of attention. If you are thrust into the position of entertaining him, a display of your limited means may win you his sympathy. Any attempt to impress him with your grace and generosity can prove fatal: Learn from Fouquet or pay the price.

In all of these cases it is not a weakness to disguise your strengths if in the end they lead to power. By letting others outshine you, you remain in control, instead of being a victim of their insecurity. This will all come in handy the day you decide to rise above your inferior status. If, like Galileo, you can make your master shine even more in the eyes of others, then you are a godsend and you will be instantly promoted.

Image:
The Stars in the
Sky. There can be only
one sun at a time. Never
obscure the sunlight, or
rival the sun's brilliance;
rather, fade into the sky and
find ways to heighten
the master star's
intensity.

Authority: Avoid outshining the master. All superiority is odious, but the superiority of a subject over his prince is not only stupid, it is fatal. This is a lesson that the stars in the sky teach us—they may be related to the sun, and just as brilliant, but they never appear in her company. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

You cannot worry about upsetting every person you come across, but you must be selectively cruel. If your superior is a falling star, there is nothing to fear from outshining him. Do not be merciful—your master had no such scruples in his own cold-blooded climb to the top. Gauge his strength. If he is weak, discreetly hasten his downfall: Outdo, outcharm, outsmart him at key moments. If he is *very* weak and ready to fall, let nature take its course. Do not risk outshining a feeble superior—it might appear cruel or spiteful. But if your master is firm in his position, yet you know yourself to be the more capable, bide your time and be patient. It is the natural course of things that power eventually fades and weakens. Your master will fall someday, and if you play it right, you will outlive and someday outshine him.

LAW

2

NEVER PUT TOO MUCH TRUST IN FRIENDS, LEARN HOW TO USE ENEMIES

JUDGMENT

Be wary of friends—they will betray you more quickly, for they are easily aroused to envy. They also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a friend, because he has more to prove. In fact, you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

In the mid–ninth century A.D., a young man named Michael III assumed the throne of the Byzantine Empire. His mother, the Empress Theodora, had been banished to a nunnery, and her lover, Theoctistus, had been murdered; at the head of the conspiracy to depose Theodora and enthrone Michael had been Michael's uncle, Bardas, a man of intelligence and ambition. Michael was now a young, inexperienced ruler, surrounded by intriguers, murderers, and profligates. In this time of peril he needed someone he could trust as his councillor, and his thoughts turned to Basilius, his best friend. Basilius had no experience whatsoever in government and politics—in fact, he was the head of the royal stables—but he had proven his love and gratitude time and again.

To have a good enemy, choose a friend: He knows where to strike.

DIANE DE POITIERS, 1499–1566, MISTRESS OF HENRI II OF FRANCE

They had met a few years before, when Michael had been visiting the stables just as a wild horse got loose. Basilius, a young groom from peasant Macedonian stock, had saved Michael's life. The groom's strength and courage had impressed Michael, who immediately raised Basilius from the obscurity of being a horse trainer to the position of head of the stables. He loaded his friend with gifts and favors and they became inseparable. Basilius was sent to the finest school in Byzantium, and the crude peasant became a cultured and sophisticated courtier.

Every time I bestow a vacant office I make a hundred discontented persons and one ingrate.

LOUIS XIV, 1638–1715

Now Michael was emperor, and in need of someone loyal. Who could he better trust with the post of chamberlain and chief councillor than a young man who owed him everything?

Basilius could be trained for the job and Michael loved him like a brother. Ignoring the advice of those who recommended the much more qualified Bardas, Michael chose his friend.

Thus for my own part I have more than once been deceived by the person I loved most and of whose love, above everyone else's, I have been most confident. So that I believe that it may be right to love and serve one person above all others, according to merit and worth, but never to trust so much in this tempting trap of friendship as to have cause to repent of it later on.

BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE, 1478–1529

Basilius learned well and was soon advising the emperor on all matters of state. The only problem seemed to be money—Basilius never had enough. Exposure to the splendor of Byzantine court life made him avaricious for the perks of power. Michael doubled, then tripled his salary, ennobled him, and married him off to his own mistress, Eudoxia Ingerina. Keeping such a trusted friend and adviser satisfied was worth any price. But more trouble was to come. Bardas was now head of the army, and Basilius convinced Michael that the man was hopelessly ambitious. Under the illusion that he could control his nephew, Bardas had conspired to put him on the throne, and he could conspire again, this time to get rid of Michael and assume the crown himself. Basilius poured poison into Michael's ear until the emperor agreed to have his uncle murdered. During a great horse race, Basilius closed in on Bardas in the crowd and stabbed him to death. Soon after, Basilius asked that he replace Bardas as head of the army, where he could keep control of the realm and quell rebellion. This was granted.

Now Basilius's power and wealth only grew, and a few years later Michael, in financial straits from his own extravagance, asked him to pay back some of the money he had borrowed over the years. To Michael's shock and astonishment, Basilius refused, with a look of such impudence

that the emperor suddenly realized his predicament: The former stable boy had more money, more allies in the army and senate, and in the end more power than the emperor himself. A few weeks later, after a night of heavy drinking, Michael awoke to find himself surrounded by soldiers. Basilius watched as they stabbed the emperor to death. Then, after proclaiming himself emperor, he rode his horse through the streets of Byzantium, brandishing the head of his former benefactor and best friend at the end of a long pike.

Interpretation

Michael III staked his future on the sense of gratitude he thought Basilius must feel for him. Surely Basilius would serve him best; he owed the emperor his wealth, his education, and his position. Then, once Basilius was in power, anything he needed it was best to give to him, strengthening the bonds between the two men. It was only on the fateful day when the emperor saw that impudent smile on Basilius's face that he realized his deadly mistake.

He had created a monster. He had allowed a man to see power up close—a man who then wanted more, who asked for anything and got it, who felt encumbered by the charity he had received and simply did what many people do in such a situation: They forget the favors they have received and imagine they have earned their success by their own merits.

At Michael's moment of realization, he could still have saved his own life, but friendship and love blind every man to their interests. Nobody believes a friend can betray. And Michael went on disbelieving until the day his head ended up on a pike.

Lord, protect me from my friends; I can take care of my enemies.
Voltaire, 1694–1778

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

For several centuries after the fall of the Han Dynasty (A.D. 222), Chinese history followed the same pattern of violent and bloody coups, one after the other. Army men would plot to kill a weak emperor, then would replace him on the Dragon Throne with a strong general. The general would start a new dynasty and crown himself emperor; to ensure his own survival he would kill off his fellow generals. A few years later, however, the pattern would resume: New generals would rise up and assassinate him or his sons in their turn. To be emperor of China was to be alone, surrounded by a pack of enemies—it was the least powerful, least secure position in the realm.

In A.D. 959, General Chao K'uang-yin became Emperor Sung. He knew the odds, the probability that within a year or two he would be murdered; how could he break the pattern? Soon after becoming emperor, Sung ordered a banquet to celebrate the new dynasty, and invited the most powerful commanders in the army. After they had drunk much wine, he

THE SNAKE, THE FARMER, AND THE HERON

A snake chased by hunters asked a farmer to save its life. To hide it from its pursuers, the farmer squatted and let the snake crawl into his belly. But when the danger had passed and the farmer asked the snake to come out, the snake refused. It was warm and safe inside. On his way home, the man saw a heron and went up to him and whispered what had happened. The heron told him to squat and strain to eject the snake. When the snake snuck its head out, the heron caught it, pulled it out, and killed it. The farmer was worried that the snake's poison might still be inside him, and the heron told him that the cure for snake poison was to cook and eat six white fowl. "You're a white fowl," said the farmer. "You'll do for a start." He grabbed the heron, put it in a bag, and carried it home, where he hung it up while he told his wife what had happened. "I'm surprised at you," said the wife. "The bird does you a kindness, rids you of the evil in your belly, saves your life in fact, yet you catch it and talk of killing it." She immediately released the heron, and it flew away. But on its way, it gouged out her eyes.

Moral: When you see water flowing uphill, it means that someone is repaying a kindness.

AFRICAN FOLK TALE

dismissed the guards and everybody else except the generals, who now feared he would murder them in one fell swoop. Instead, he addressed them: "The whole day is spent in fear, and I am unhappy both at the table and in my bed. For which one of you does not dream of ascending the throne? I do not doubt your allegiance, but if by some chance your subordinates, seeking wealth and position, were to force the emperor's yellow robe upon you in turn, how could you refuse it?" Drunk and fearing for their lives, the generals proclaimed their innocence and their loyalty. But Sung had other ideas: "The best way to pass one's days is in peaceful enjoyment of riches and honor. If you are willing to give up your commands, I am ready to provide you with fine estates and beautiful dwellings where you may take your pleasure with singers and girls as your companions."

The astonished generals realized that instead of a life of anxiety and struggle Sung was offering them riches and security. The next day, all of the generals tendered their resignations, and they retired as nobles to the estates that Sung bestowed on them.

In one stroke, Sung turned a pack of "friendly" wolves, who would likely have betrayed him, into a group of docile lambs, far from all power.

Over the next few years Sung continued his campaign to secure his rule. In A.D. 971, King Liu of the Southern Han finally surrendered to him after years of rebellion. To Liu's astonishment, Sung gave him a rank in the imperial court and invited him to the palace to seal their newfound friendship with wine. As King Liu took the glass that Sung offered him, he hesitated, fearing it contained poison. "Your subject's crimes certainly merit death," he cried out, "but I beg Your Majesty to spare your subject's life. Indeed I dare not drink this wine." Emperor Sung laughed, took the glass from Liu, and swallowed it himself. There was no poison. From then on Liu became his most trusted and loyal friend.

At the time, China had splintered into many smaller kingdoms. When Ch'ien Shu, the king of one of these, was defeated, Sung's ministers advised the emperor to lock this rebel up. They presented documents proving that he was still conspiring to kill Sung. When Ch'ien Shu came to visit the emperor, however, instead of locking him up, Sung honored him. He also gave him a package, which he told the former king to open when he was halfway home. Ch'ien Shu opened the bundle on his return journey and saw that it contained all the papers documenting his conspiracy. He realized that Sung knew of his murderous plans, yet had spared him nonetheless. This generosity won him over, and he too became one of Sung's most loyal vassals.

There are many who think therefore that a wise prince ought, when he has the chance, to foment astutely some enmity, so that by suppressing it he will augment his greatness. Princes, and especially new ones, have found more faith and more usefulness in those men, whom at the beginning of their power they regarded with suspicion, than in those they at first confided in. Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena, governed his state more by those whom he suspected than by others.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI, 1469–1527

A brahman, a great expert in Veda who has become a great archer as well, offers his services to his good friend, who is now the king. The brahman cries out when he sees the king, "Recognize me, your friend!" The king answers him with contempt and then explains: "Yes, we were friends before, but our friendship was based on what power we had. . . . I was friends with you, good brahman, because it served my purpose. No pauper is friend to the rich, no fool to the wise, no coward to the

Interpretation

A Chinese proverb compares friends to the jaws and teeth of a dangerous animal: If you are not careful, you will find them chewing you up. Emperor Sung knew the jaws he was passing between when he assumed the throne: His "friends" in the army would chew him up like meat, and if he somehow survived, his "friends" in the government would have him for supper.

brave. An old friend—who needs him? It is two men of equal wealth and equal birth who contract friendship and marriage, not a rich man and a pauper. . . . An old friend—who needs him?

THE MAHABHARATA, C. THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Emperor Sung would have no truck with "friends"—he bribed his fellow generals with splendid estates and kept them far away. This was a much better way to emasculate them than killing them, which would only have led other generals to seek vengeance. And Sung would have nothing to do with "friendly" ministers. More often than not, they would end up drinking his famous cup of poisoned wine.

Instead of relying on friends, Sung used his enemies, one after the other, transforming them into far more reliable subjects. While a friend expects more and more favors, and seethes with jealousy, these former enemies expected nothing and got everything. A man suddenly spared the guillotine is a grateful man indeed, and will go to the ends of the earth for the man who has pardoned him. In time, these former enemies became Sung's most trusted friends.

And Sung was finally able to break the pattern of coups, violence, and civil war—the Sung Dynasty ruled China for more than three hundred years.

Pick up a bee from kindness, and learn the limitations of kindness.

SUFI PROVERB

In a speech Abraham Lincoln delivered at the height of the Civil War, he referred to the Southerners as fellow human beings who were in error. An elderly lady chastised him for not calling them irreconcilable enemies who must be destroyed. "Why, madam," Lincoln replied, "do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"

Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a pleasure.

TACITUS, C. A.D. 55–120

KEYS TO POWER

It is natural to want to employ your friends when you find yourself in times of need. The world is a harsh place, and your friends soften the harshness. Besides, you know them. Why depend on a stranger when you have a friend at hand?

The problem is that you often do not know your friends as well as you imagine. Friends often agree on things in order to avoid an argument. They cover up their unpleasant qualities so as to not offend each other. They laugh extra hard at each other's jokes. Since honesty rarely strengthens friendship, you may never know how a friend truly feels. Friends will say that they love your poetry, adore your music, envy your taste in clothes—maybe they mean it, often they do not.

When you decide to hire a friend, you gradually discover the qualities he or she has kept hidden. Strangely enough, it is your act of kindness that unbalances everything. People want to feel they deserve their good fortune. The receipt of a favor can become oppressive: It means you have been chosen because you are a friend, not necessarily because you are deserving. There is almost a touch of condescension in the act of hiring friends that secretly afflicts them. The injury will come out slowly: A little more honesty, flashes of resentment and envy here and there, and before you know it your friendship fades. The more favors and gifts you supply to revive the friendship, the less gratitude you receive.

Ingratitude has a long and deep history. It has demonstrated its powers

for so many centuries, that it is truly amazing that people continue to underestimate them. Better to be wary. If you never expect gratitude from a friend, you will be pleasantly surprised when they do prove grateful.

The problem with using or hiring friends is that it will inevitably limit your power. The friend is rarely the one who is most able to help you; and in the end, skill and competence are far more important than friendly feelings. (Michael III had a man right under his nose who would have steered him right and kept him alive: That man was Bardas.)

All working situations require a kind of distance between people. You are trying to work, not make friends; friendliness (real or false) only obscures that fact. The key to power, then, is the ability to judge who is best able to further your interests in all situations. Keep friends for friendship, but work with the skilled and competent.

Your enemies, on the other hand, are an untapped gold mine that you must learn to exploit. When Talleyrand, Napoleon's foreign minister, decided in 1807 that his boss was leading France to ruin, and the time had come to turn against him, he understood the dangers of conspiring against the emperor; he needed a partner, a confederate—what friend could he trust in such a project? He chose Joseph Fouché, head of the secret police, his most hated enemy, a man who had even tried to have him assassinated. He knew that their former hatred would create an opportunity for an emotional reconciliation. He knew that Fouché would expect nothing from him, and in fact would work to prove that he was worthy of Talleyrand's choice; a person who has something to prove will move mountains for you. Finally, he knew that his relationship with Fouché would be based on mutual self-interest, and would not be contaminated by personal feeling. The selection proved perfect; although the conspirators did not succeed in toppling Napoleon, the union of such powerful but unlikely partners generated much interest in the cause; opposition to the emperor slowly began to spread. And from then on, Talleyrand and Fouché had a fruitful working relationship. Whenever you can, bury the hatchet with an enemy, and make a point of putting him in your service.

As Lincoln said, you destroy an enemy when you make a friend of him. In 1971, during the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger was the target of an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt, a conspiracy involving, among others, the renowned antiwar activist priests the Berrigan brothers, four more Catholic priests, and four nuns. In private, without informing the Secret Service or the Justice Department, Kissinger arranged a Saturday-morning meeting with three of the alleged kidnappers. Explaining to his guests that he would have most American soldiers out of Vietnam by mid-1972, he completely charmed them. They gave him some "Kidnap Kissinger" buttons and one of them remained a friend of his for years, visiting him on several occasions. This was not just a onetime ploy: Kissinger made a policy of working with those who disagreed with him. Colleagues commented that he seemed to get along better with his enemies than with his friends.

Without enemies around us, we grow lazy. An enemy at our heels sharpens our wits, keeping us focused and alert. It is sometimes better,

PROFITING BY OUR ENEMIES

King Hiero chanced upon a time, speaking with one of his enemies, to be told in a reproachful manner that he had stinking breath. Whereupon the good king, being somewhat dismayed in himself, as soon as he returned home chided his wife, "How does it happen that you never told me of this problem?" The woman, being a simple, chaste, and harmless dame, said, "Sir, I had thought all men's breath had smelled so." Thus it is plain that faults that are evident to the senses, gross and corporal, or otherwise notorious to the world, we know by our enemies sooner than by our friends and familiars.

PLUTARCH,
c. A.D. 46–120

then, to use enemies as enemies rather than transforming them into friends or allies.

Mao Tse-tung saw conflict as key in his approach to power. In 1937 the Japanese invaded China, interrupting the civil war between Mao's Communists and their enemy, the Nationalists.

Fearing that the Japanese would wipe them out, some Communist leaders advocated leaving the Nationalists to fight the Japanese, and using the time to recuperate. Mao disagreed: The Japanese could not possibly defeat and occupy a vast country like China for long. Once they left, the Communists would have grown rusty if they had been out of combat for several years, and would be ill prepared to reopen their struggle with the Nationalists. To fight a formidable foe like the Japanese, in fact, would be the perfect training for the Communists' ragtag army. Mao's plan was adopted, and it worked: By the time the Japanese finally retreated, the Communists had gained the fighting experience that helped them defeat the Nationalists.

Years later, a Japanese visitor tried to apologize to Mao for his country's invasion of China. Mao interrupted, "Should I not thank you instead?" Without a worthy opponent, he explained, a man or group cannot grow stronger.

Mao's strategy of constant conflict has several key components. First, be certain that in the long run you will emerge victorious. Never pick a fight with someone you are not sure you can defeat, as Mao knew the Japanese would be defeated in time. Second, if you have no apparent enemies, you must sometimes set up a convenient target, even turning a friend into an enemy. Mao used this tactic time and again in politics. Third, use such enemies to define your cause more clearly to the public, even framing it as a struggle of good against evil. Mao actually encouraged China's disagreements with the Soviet Union and the United States; without clear-cut enemies, he believed, his people would lose any sense of what Chinese Communism meant. A sharply defined enemy is a far stronger argument for your side than all the words you could possibly put together.

Never let the presence of enemies upset or distress you—you are far better off with a declared opponent or two than not knowing where your real enemies lie. The man of power welcomes conflict, using enemies to enhance his reputation as a surefooted fighter who can be relied upon in times of uncertainty.

Image: The Jaws of Ingratitude. Knowing what would happen if you put a finger in the mouth of a lion, you would stay clear of it. With friends you will have no such caution, and if you hire them, they will eat you alive with ingratitude.

Authority: Know how to use enemies for your own profit. You must learn to grab a sword not by its blade, which would cut you, but by the handle, which allows you to defend yourself. The wise man profits more from his enemies, than a fool from his friends. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

Although it is generally best not to mix work with friendship, there are times when a friend can be used to greater effect than an enemy. A man of power, for example, often has dirty work that has to be done, but for the sake of appearances it is generally preferable to have other people do it for him; friends often do this the best, since their affection for him makes them willing to take chances. Also, if your plans go awry for some reason, you can use a friend as a convenient scapegoat. This "fall of the favorite" was a trick often used by kings and sovereigns: They would let their closest friend at court take the fall for a mistake, since the public would not believe that they would deliberately sacrifice a friend for such a purpose. Of course, after you play that card, you have lost your friend forever. It is best, then, to reserve the scapegoat role for someone who is close to you but not too close.

Finally, the problem about working with friends is that it confuses the boundaries and distances that working requires. But if both partners in the arrangement understand the dangers involved, a friend often can be employed to great effect. You must never let your guard down in such a venture, however; always be on the lookout for any signs of emotional disturbance such as envy and ingratitude. Nothing is stable in the realm of power, and even the closest of friends can be transformed into the worst of enemies.

LAW

3

CONCEAL YOUR INTENTIONS

JUDGMENT

Keep people off-balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. If they have no clue what you are up to, they cannot prepare a defense. Guide them far enough down the wrong path, envelop them in enough smoke, and by the time they realize your intentions, it will be too late.

PART I: USE DECOYED OBJECTS OF DESIRE AND RED HERRINGS TO THROW PEOPLE OFF THE SCENT

If at any point in the deception you practice people have the slightest suspicion as to your intentions, all is lost. Do not give them the chance to sense what you are up to: Throw them off the scent by dragging red herrings across the path. Use false sincerity, send ambiguous signals, set up misleading objects of desire. Unable to distinguish the genuine from the false, they cannot pick out your real goal.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Over several weeks, Ninon de Lenclos, the most infamous courtesan of seventeenth-century France, listened patiently as the Marquis de Sevigné explained his struggles in pursuing a beautiful but difficult young countess. Ninon was sixty-two at the time, and more than experienced in matters of love; the marquis was a lad of twenty-two, handsome, dashing, but hopelessly inexperienced in romance. At first Ninon was amused to hear the marquis talk about his mistakes, but finally she had had enough. Unable to bear ineptitude in any realm, least of all in seducing a woman, she decided to take the young man under her wing. First, he had to understand that this was war, and that the beautiful countess was a citadel to which he had to lay siege as carefully as any general. Every step had to be planned and executed with the utmost attention to detail and nuance.

Instructing the marquis to start over, Ninon told him to approach the countess with a bit of distance, an air of nonchalance. The next time the two were alone together, she said, he would confide in the countess as would a friend but not a potential lover. This was to throw her off the scent. The countess was no longer to take his interest in her for granted—perhaps he was only interested in friendship.

Ninon planned ahead. Once the countess was confused, it would be time to make her jealous. At the next encounter, at a major fête in Paris, the marquis would show up with a beautiful young woman at his side. This beautiful young woman had equally beautiful friends, so that wherever the countess would now see the marquis, he would be surrounded by the most stunning young women in Paris. Not only would the countess be seething with jealousy, she would come to see the marquis as someone who was desired by others. It was hard for Ninon to make the marquis understand, but she patiently explained that a woman who is interested in a man wants to see that other women are interested in him, too. Not only does that give him instant value, it makes it all the more satisfying to snatch him from their clutches.

Once the countess was jealous but intrigued, it would be time to beguile her. On Ninon's instructions, the marquis would fail to show up at affairs where the countess expected to see him. Then, suddenly, he would appear at salons he had never frequented before, but that the countess at-

tended often. She would be unable to predict his moves. All of this would push her into the state of emotional confusion that is a prerequisite for successful seduction.

These moves were executed, and took several weeks. Ninon monitored the marquis's progress: Through her network of spies, she heard how the countess would laugh a little harder at his witticisms, listen more closely to his stories. She heard that the countess was suddenly asking questions about him. Her friends told her that at social affairs the countess would often look up at the marquis, following his steps. Ninon felt certain that the young woman was falling under his spell. It was a matter of weeks now, maybe a month or two, but if all went smoothly, the citadel would fall.

A few days later the marquis was at the countess's home. They were alone. Suddenly he was a different man: This time acting on his own impulse, rather than following Ninon's instructions, he took the countess's hands and told her he was in love with her. The young woman seemed confused, a reaction he did not expect. She became polite, then excused herself. For the rest of the evening she avoided his eyes, was not there to say good-night to him. The next few times he visited he was told she was not at home. When she finally admitted him again, the two felt awkward and uncomfortable with each other. The spell was broken.

Interpretation

Ninon de Lenclos knew everything about the art of love. The greatest writers, thinkers, and politicians of the time had been her lovers—men like La Rochefoucauld, Molière, and Richelieu. Seduction was a game to her, to be practiced with skill. As she got older, and her reputation grew, the most important families in France would send their sons to her to be instructed in matters of love.

Ninon knew that men and women are very different, but when it comes to seduction they feel the same: Deep down inside, they often sense when they are being seduced, but they give in because they enjoy the feeling of being led along. It is a pleasure to let go, and to allow the other person to detour you into a strange country. Everything in seduction, however, depends on suggestion. You cannot announce your intentions or reveal them directly in words. Instead you must throw your targets off the scent. To surrender to your guidance they must be appropriately confused. You have to scramble your signals—appear interested in another man or woman (the decoy), then hint at being interested in the target, then feign indifference, on and on. Such patterns not only confuse, they excite.

Imagine this story from the countess's perspective: After a few of the marquis's moves, she sensed the marquis was playing some sort of game, but the game delighted her. She did not know where he was leading her, but so much the better. His moves intrigued her, each of them keeping her waiting for the next one—she even enjoyed her jealousy and confusion, for sometimes any emotion is better than the boredom of security. Perhaps the marquis had ulterior motives; most men do. But she was willing to wait and

see, and probably if she had been made to wait long enough, what he was up to would not have mattered.

The moment the marquis uttered that fatal word "love," however, all was changed. This was no longer a game with moves, it was an artless show of passion. His intention was revealed: He *was* seducing her. This put everything he had done in a new light. All that before had been charming now seemed ugly and conniving; the countess felt embarrassed and used. A door closed that would never open again.

Do not be held a cheat, even though it is impossible to live today without being one. Let your greatest cunning lie in covering up what looks like cunning.
Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In 1850 the young Otto von Bismarck, then a thirty-five-year-old deputy in the Prussian parliament, was at a turning point in his career. The issues of the day were the unification of the many states (including Prussia) into which Germany was then divided, and a war against Austria, the powerful neighbor to the south that hoped to keep the Germans weak and at odds, even threatening to intervene if they tried to unite. Prince William, next in line to be Prussia's king, was in favor of going to war, and the parliament rallied to the cause, prepared to back any mobilization of troops. The only ones to oppose war were the present king, Frederick William IV, and his ministers, who preferred to appease the powerful Austrians.

Throughout his career, Bismarck had been a loyal, even passionate supporter of Prussian might and power. He dreamed of German unification, of going to war against Austria and humiliating the country that for so long had kept Germany divided. A former soldier, he saw warfare as a glorious business.

This, after all, was the man who years later would say, "The great questions of the time will be decided, not by speeches and resolutions, but by iron and blood."

Passionate patriot and lover of military glory, Bismarck nevertheless gave a speech in parliament at the height of the war fever that astonished all who heard it. "Woe unto the statesman," he said, "who makes war without a reason that will still be valid when the war is over! After the war, you will all look differently at these questions. Will you then have the courage to turn to the peasant contemplating the ashes of his farm, to the man who has been crippled, to the father who has lost his children?" Not only did Bismarck go on to talk of the madness of this war, but, strangest of all, he praised Austria and defended her actions. This went against everything he had stood for. The consequences were immediate. Bismarck was against the war—what could this possibly mean? Other deputies were confused, and several of them changed their votes. Eventually the king and his ministers won out, and war was averted.

A few weeks after Bismarck's infamous speech, the king, grateful that

he had spoken for peace, made him a cabinet minister. A few years later he became the Prussian premier. In this role he eventually led his country and a peace-loving king into a war against Austria, crushing the former empire and establishing a mighty German state, with Prussia at its head.

Interpretation

At the time of his speech in 1850, Bismarck made several calculations. First, he sensed that the Prussian military, which had not kept pace with other European armies, was unready for war—that Austria, in fact, might very well win, a disastrous result for the future. Second, if the war were lost and Bismarck had supported it, his career would be gravely jeopardized. The king and his conservative ministers wanted peace; Bismarck wanted power. The answer was to throw people off the scent by supporting a cause he detested, saying things he would laugh at if said by another. A whole country was fooled. It was because of Bismarck's speech that the king made him a minister, a position from which he quickly rose to be prime minister, attaining the power to strengthen the Prussian military and accomplish what he had wanted all along: the humiliation of Austria and the unification of Germany under Prussia's leadership.

Bismarck was certainly one of the cleverest statesman who ever lived, a master of strategy and deception. No one suspected what he was up to in this case. Had he announced his real intentions, arguing that it was better to wait now and fight later, he would not have won the argument, since most Prussians wanted war at that moment and mistakenly believed that their army was superior to the Austrians. Had he played up to the king, asking to be made a minister in exchange for supporting peace, he would not have succeeded either: The king would have distrusted his ambition and doubted his sincerity.

By being completely insincere and sending misleading signals, however, he deceived everyone, concealed his purpose, and attained everything he wanted. Such is the power of hiding your intentions.

KEYS TO POWER

Most people are open books. They say what they feel, blurt out their opinions at every opportunity, and constantly reveal their plans and intentions. They do this for several reasons. First, it is easy and natural to always want to talk about one's feelings and plans for the future. It takes effort to control your tongue and monitor what you reveal. Second, many believe that by being honest and open they are winning people's hearts and showing their good nature.They are greatly deluded. Honesty is actually a blunt instrument, which bloodies more than it cuts. Your honesty is likely to offend people; it is much more prudent to tailor your words, telling people what they want to hear rather than the coarse and ugly truth of what you feel or think. More important, by being unabashedly open you make yourself so predictable and familiar that it is almost impossible to respect or fear you, and power will not accrue to a person who cannot inspire such emotions.

If you yearn for power, quickly lay honesty aside, and train yourself in the art of concealing your intentions. Master the art and you will always have the upper hand. Basic to an ability to conceal one's intentions is a simple truth about human nature: Our first instinct is to always trust appearances. We cannot go around doubting the reality of what we see and hear—constantly imagining that appearances concealed something else would exhaust and terrify us. This fact makes it relatively easy to conceal one's intentions. Simply dangle an object you seem to desire, a goal you seem to aim for, in front of people's eyes and they will take the appearance for reality. Once their eyes focus on the decoy, they will fail to notice what you are really up to. In seduction, set up conflicting signals, such as desire and indifference, and you not only throw them off the scent, you inflame their desire to possess you.

A tactic that is often effective in setting up a red herring is to appear to support an idea or cause that is actually contrary to your own sentiments. (Bismarck used this to great effect in his speech in 1850.) Most people will believe you have experienced a change of heart, since it is so unusual to play so lightly with something as emotional as one's opinions and values. The same applies for any decoyed object of desire: Seem to want something in which you are actually not at all interested and your enemies will be thrown off the scent, making all kinds of errors in their calculations.

During the War of the Spanish Succession in 1711, the Duke of Marlborough, head of the English army, wanted to destroy a key French fort, because it protected a vital thoroughfare into France. Yet he knew that if he destroyed it, the French would realize what he wanted—to advance down that road. Instead, then, he merely captured the fort, and garrisoned it with some of his troops, making it appear as if he wanted it for some purpose of his own. The French attacked the fort and the duke let them recapture it. Once they had it back, though, *they* destroyed it, figuring that the duke had wanted it for some important reason. Now that the fort was gone, the road was unprotected, and Marlborough could easily march into France.

Use this tactic in the following manner: Hide your intentions not by closing up (with the risk of appearing secretive, and making people suspicious) but by talking endlessly about your desires and goals—just not your real ones. You will kill three birds with one stone: You appear friendly, open, and trusting; you conceal your intentions; and you send your rivals on time-consuming wild-goose chases.

Another powerful tool in throwing people off the scent is false sincerity. People easily mistake sincerity for honesty. Remember—their first instinct is to trust appearances, and since they value honesty and *want* to believe in the honesty of those around them, they will rarely doubt you or see through your act. Seeming to believe what you say gives your words great weight. This is how Iago deceived and destroyed Othello: Given the depth of his emotions, the apparent sincerity of his concerns about Desdemona's supposed infidelity, how could Othello distrust him? This is also how the great con artist Yellow Kid Weil pulled the wool over suckers' eyes: Seeming to believe so deeply in the decoyed object he was dangling

in front of them (a phony stock, a touted racehorse), he made its reality hard to doubt. It is important, of course, not to go too far in this area. Sincerity is a tricky tool: Appear overpassionate and you raise suspicions. Be measured and believable or your ruse will seem the put-on that it is.

To make your false sincerity an effective weapon in concealing your intentions, espouse a belief in honesty and forthrightness as important social values. Do this as publicly as possible. Emphasize your position on this subject by occasionally divulging some heartfelt thought—though only one that is actually meaningless or irrelevant, of course. Napoleon's minister Talleyrand was a master at taking people into his confidence by revealing some apparent secret. This feigned confidence—a decoy—would then elicit a real confidence on the other person's part.

Remember: The best deceivers do everything they can to cloak their roguish qualities. They cultivate an air of honesty in one area to disguise their dishonesty in others. Honesty is merely another decoy in their arsenal of weapons.

PART II: USE SMOKE SCREENS TO DISGUISE YOUR ACTIONS

Deception is always the best strategy, but the best deceptions require a screen of smoke to distract people's attention from your real purpose. The bland exterior—like the unreadable poker face—is often the perfect smoke screen, hiding your intentions behind the comfortable and familiar. If you lead the sucker down a familiar path, he won't catch on when you lead him into a trap.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW I

In 1910, a Mr. Sam Geezil of Chicago sold his warehouse business for close to $1 million. He settled down to semiretirement and the managing of his many properties, but deep inside he itched for the old days of deal-making. One day a young man named Joseph Weil visited his office, wanting to buy an apartment he had up for sale. Geezil explained the terms: The price was $8,000, but he only required a down payment of $2,000. Weil said he would sleep on it, but he came back the following day and offered to pay the full $8,000 in cash, if Geezil could wait a couple of days, until a deal Weil was working on came through. Even in semiretirement, a clever businessman like Geezil was curious as to how Weil would be able to come up with so much cash (roughly $150,000 today) so quickly. Weil seemed reluctant to say, and quickly changed the subject, but Geezil was persistent. Finally, after assurances of confidentiality, Weil told Geezil the following story.

Weil's uncle was the secretary to a coterie of multimillionaire financiers. These wealthy gentlemen had purchased a hunting lodge in Michigan ten years ago, at a cheap price. They had not used the lodge for a few years, so they had decided to sell it and had asked Weil's uncle to get whatever he could for it. For reasons—good reasons—of his own, the uncle had been nursing a grudge against the millionaires for years; this was his chance to get back at them. He would sell the property for $35,000 to a set-up man (whom it was Weil's job to find). The financiers were too wealthy to worry about this low price. The set-up man would then turn around and sell the property again for its real price, around $155,000. The uncle, Weil, and the third man would split the profits from this second sale. It was all legal and for a good cause—the uncle's just retribution.

Geezil had heard enough: He wanted to be the set-up buyer. Weil was reluctant to involve him, but Geezil would not back down: The idea of a large profit, plus a little adventure, had him champing at the bit. Weil explained that Geezil would have to put up the $35,000 in cash to bring the deal off. Geezil, a millionaire, said he could get the money with a snap of his fingers. Weil finally relented and agreed to arrange a meeting between the uncle, Geezil, and the financiers, in the town of Galesburg, Illinois.

On the train ride to Galesburg, Geezil met the uncle—an impressive

JEHU, KING OF ISRAEL, FEIGNS WORSHIP OF THE IDOL BA'AL

Then Jehu assembled all the people, and said to them, "Ahab served Ba'al a little; but Jehu will serve him much more. Now therefore call to me all the prophets of Ba'al, all his worshippers and all his priests; let none be missing, for I have a great sacrifice to offer to Ba'al; whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu did it with cunning in order to destroy the worshippers of Ba'al. And Jehu ordered, "Sanctify a solemn assembly for Ba'al." So they proclaimed it. And Jehu sent throughout all Israel; and all the worshippers of Ba'al came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And they entered the house of Ba'al, and the house of Ba'al was filled from one end to the other. . . . Then Jehu went into the house of Ba'al . . . and he said to the worshippers of Ba'al, "Search, and see that there is no servant of the LORD here

among you, but only the worshippers of Ba'al." Then he went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside, and said, "The man who allows any of those whom I give into your hands to escape shall forfeit his life." So as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guard and to the officers, "Go in and slay them; let not a man escape." So when they put them to the sword, the guard and the officers cast them out and went into the inner room of the house of Ba'al and they brought out the pillar that was in the house of Ba'al and burned it. And they demolished the pillar of Ba'al and demolished the house of Ba'al, and made it a latrine to this day. Thus Jehu wiped out Ba'al from Israel.

OLD TESTAMENT,
2 KINGS 10:18–28

man, with whom he avidly discussed business. Weil also brought along a companion, a somewhat paunchy man named George Gross. Weil explained to Geezil that he himself was a boxing trainer, that Gross was one of the promising prizefighters he trained, and that he had asked Gross to come along to make sure the fighter stayed in shape. For a promising fighter, Gross was unimpressive looking—he had gray hair and a beer belly—but Geezil was so excited about the deal that he didn't really think about the man's flabby appearance.

Once in Galesburg, Weil and his uncle went to fetch the financiers while Geezil waited in a hotel room with Gross, who promptly put on his boxing trunks. As Geezil half watched, Gross began to shadowbox. Distracted as he was, Geezil ignored how badly the boxer wheezed after a few minutes of exercise, although his style seemed real enough. An hour later, Weil and his uncle reappeared with the financiers, an impressive, intimidating group of men, all wearing fancy suits. The meeting went well and the financiers agreed to sell the lodge to Geezil, who had already had the $35,000 wired to a local bank.

This minor business now settled, the financiers sat back in their chairs and began to banter about high finance, throwing out the name "J. P. Morgan" as if they knew the man. Finally one of them noticed the boxer in the corner of the room. Weil explained what he was doing there. The financier countered that he too had a boxer in his entourage, whom he named. Weil laughed brazenly and exclaimed that his man could easily knock out their man. Conversation escalated into argument. In the heat of passion, Weil challenged the men to a bet. The financiers eagerly agreed and left to get their man ready for a fight the next day.

As soon as they had left, the uncle yelled at Weil, right in front of Geezil: They did not have enough money to bet with, and once the financiers discovered this, the uncle would be fired. Weil apologized for getting him in this mess, but he had a plan: He knew the other boxer well, and with a little bribe, they could fix the fight. But where would the money come from for the bet? the uncle replied. Without it they were as good as dead. Finally Geezil had heard enough. Unwilling to jeopardize *his* deal with any ill will, he offered his own $35,000 cash for part of the bet. Even if he lost that, he would wire for more money and still make a profit on the sale of the lodge. The uncle and nephew thanked him. With their own $15,000 and Geezil's $35,000 they would manage to have enough for the bet. That evening, as Geezil watched the two boxers rehearse the fix in the hotel room, his mind reeled at the killing he was going to make from both the boxing match and the sale of the lodge.

The fight took place in a gym the next day. Weil handled the cash, which was placed for security in a locked box. Everything was proceeding as planned in the hotel room. The financiers were looking glum at how badly their fighter was doing, and Geezil was dreaming about the easy money he was about to make. Then, suddenly, a wild swing by the financier's fighter hit Gross hard in the face, knocking him down. When he hit the canvas, blood spurted from his mouth. He coughed, then lay still.

One of the financiers, a former doctor, checked his pulse; he was dead. The millionaires panicked: Everyone had to get out before the police arrived—they could all be charged with murder.

Terrified, Geezil hightailed it out of the gym and back to Chicago, leaving behind his $35,000 which he was only too glad to forget, for it seemed a small price to pay to avoid being implicated in a crime. He never wanted to see Weil or any of the others again.

After Geezil scurried out, Gross stood up, under his own steam. The blood that had spurted from his mouth came from a ball filled with chicken blood and hot water that he had hidden in his cheek. The whole affair had been masterminded by Weil, better known as "the Yellow Kid," one of the most creative con artists in history. Weil split the $35,000 with the financiers and the boxers (all fellow con artists)—a nice little profit for a few days' work.

SNEAK ACROSS THE OCEAN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

This means to create a front that eventually becomes imbued with an atmosphere or impression of familiarity, within which the strategist may maneuver unseen while all eyes are trained to see obvious familiarities.

"THE THIRTY-SIX STRATEGIES," QUOTED IN THE JAPANESE ART OF WAR, THOMAS CLEARY, 1991

Interpretation

The Yellow Kid had staked out Geezil as the perfect sucker long before he set up the con. He knew the boxing-match scam would be the perfect ruse to separate Geezil from his money quickly and definitively. But he also knew that if he had begun by trying to interest Geezil in the boxing match, he would have failed miserably. He had to conceal his intentions and switch attention, create a smoke screen—in this case the sale of the lodge.

On the train ride and in the hotel room Geezil's mind had been completely occupied with the pending deal, the easy money, the chance to hobnob with wealthy men. He had failed to notice that Gross was out of shape and middle-aged at best. Such is the distracting power of a smoke screen. Engrossed in the business deal, Geezil's attention was easily diverted to the boxing match, but only at a point when it was already too late for him to notice the details that would have given Gross away. The match, after all, now depended on a bribe rather than on the boxer's physical condition. And Geezil was so distracted at the end by the illusion of the boxer's death that he completely forgot about his money.

Learn from the Yellow Kid: The familiar, inconspicuous front is the perfect smoke screen. Approach your mark with an idea that seems ordinary enough—a business deal, financial intrigue. The sucker's mind is distracted, his suspicions allayed. That is when you gently guide him onto the second path, the slippery slope down which he slides helplessly into your trap.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW II

In the mid-1920s, the powerful warlords of Ethiopia were coming to the realization that a young man of the nobility named Haile Selassie, also known as Ras Tafari, was outcompeting them all and nearing the point where he could proclaim himself their leader, unifying the country for the first time in decades. Most of his rivals could not understand how this wispy, quiet, mild-mannered man had been able to take control. Yet in

1927, Selassie was able to summon the warlords, one at a time, to come to Addis Ababa to declare their loyalty and recognize him as leader.

Some hurried, some hesitated, but only one, Dejazmach Balcha of Sidamo, dared defy Selassie totally. A blustery man, Balcha was a great warrior, and he considered the new leader weak and unworthy. He pointedly stayed away from the capital. Finally Selassie, in his gentle but stern way, commanded Balcha to come. The warlord decided to obey, but in doing so he would turn the tables on this pretender to the Ethiopian throne: He would come to Addis Ababa at his own speed, and with an army of 10,000 men, a force large enough to defend himself, perhaps even start a civil war. Stationing this formidable force in a valley three miles from the capital, he waited, as a king would. Selassie would have to come to him.

Selassie did indeed send emissaries, asking Balcha to attend an afternoon banquet in his honor. But Balcha, no fool, knew history—he knew that previous kings and lords of Ethiopia had used banquets as a trap. Once he was there and full of drink, Selassie would have him arrested or murdered. To signal his understanding of the situation, he agreed to come to the banquet, but only if he could bring his personal bodyguard—600 of his best soldiers, all armed and ready to defend him and themselves. To Balcha's surprise, Selassie answered with the utmost politeness that he would be honored to play host to such warriors.

On the way to the banquet, Balcha warned his soldiers not to get drunk and to be on their guard. When they arrived at the palace, Selassie was his charming best. He deferred to Balcha, treated him as if he desperately needed his approval and cooperation. But Balcha refused to be charmed, and he warned Selassie that if he did not return to his camp by nightfall, his army had orders to attack the capital. Selassie reacted as if hurt by his mistrust. Over the meal, when it came time for the traditional singing of songs in honor of Ethiopia's leaders, he made a point of allowing only songs honoring the warlord of Sidamo. It seemed to Balcha that Selassie was scared, intimidated by this great warrior who could not be outwitted. Sensing the change, Balcha believed that he would be the one to call the shots in the days to come.

At the end of the afternoon, Balcha and his soldiers began their march back to camp amidst cheers and gun salutes. Looking back to the capital over his shoulder, he planned his strategy—how his own soldiers would march through the capital in triumph within weeks, and Selassie would be put in his place, his place being either prison or death. When Balcha came in sight of his camp, however, he saw that something was terribly wrong. Where before there had been colorful tents stretching as far as the eye could see, now there was nothing, only smoke from doused fires. What devil's magic was this?

A witness told Balcha what had happened. During the banquet, a large army, commanded by an ally of Selassie's, had stolen up on Balcha's encampment by a side route he had not seen. This army had not come to fight, however: Knowing that Balcha would have heard a noisy battle and

hurried back with his 600-man bodyguard, Selassie had armed his own troops with baskets of gold and cash. They had surrounded Balcha's army and proceeded to purchase every last one of their weapons. Those who refused were easily intimidated. Within a few hours, Balcha's entire force had been disarmed and scattered in all directions.

Realizing his danger, Balcha decided to march south with his 600 soldiers to regroup, but the same army that had disarmed his soldiers blocked his way. The other way out was to march on the capital, but Selassie had set a large army to defend it. Like a chess player, he had predicted Balcha's moves, and had checkmated him. For the first time in his life, Balcha surrendered. To repent his sins of pride and ambition, he agreed to enter a monastery.

Interpretation

Throughout Selassie's long reign, no one could quite figure him out. Ethiopians like their leaders fierce, but Selassie, who wore the front of a gentle, peace-loving man, lasted longer than any of them. Never angry or impatient, he lured his victims with sweet smiles, lulling them with charm and obsequiousness before he attacked. In the case of Balcha, Selassie played on the man's wariness, his suspicion that the banquet was a trap—which in fact it was, but not the one he expected. Selassie's way of allaying Balcha's fears—letting him bring his bodyguard to the banquet, giving him top billing there, making him feel in control—created a thick smoke screen, concealing the real action three miles away.

Remember: The paranoid and wary are often the easiest to deceive. Win their trust in one area and you have a smoke screen that blinds their view in another, letting you creep up and level them with a devastating blow. A helpful or apparently honest gesture, or one that implies the other person's superiority—these are perfect diversionary devices.

Properly set up, the smoke screen is a weapon of great power. It enabled the gentle Selassie to totally destroy his enemy, without firing a single bullet.

Do not underestimate the power of Tafari. He creeps
like a mouse but he has jaws like a lion.
Balcha of Sidamo's last words before entering the monastery

KEYS TO POWER

If you believe that deceivers are colorful folk who mislead with elaborate lies and tall tales, you are greatly mistaken. The best deceivers utilize a bland and inconspicuous front that calls no attention to themselves. They know that extravagant words and gestures immediately raise suspicion. Instead, they envelop their mark in the familiar, the banal, the harmless. In Yellow Kid Weil's dealings with Sam Geezil, the familiar was a business deal. In the Ethiopian case, it was Selassie's misleading obsequiousness—exactly what Balcha would have expected from a weaker warlord.

Once you have lulled your suckers' attention with the familiar, they will not notice the deception being perpetrated behind their backs. This derives from a simple truth: people can only focus on one thing at a time. It is really too difficult for them to imagine that the bland and harmless person they are dealing with is simultaneously setting up something else. The grayer and more uniform the smoke in your smoke screen, the better it conceals your intentions. In the decoy and red herring devices discussed in Part I, you actively distract people; in the smoke screen, you lull your victims, drawing them into your web. Because it is so hypnotic, this is often the best way of concealing your intentions.

The simplest form of smoke screen is facial expression. Behind a bland, unreadable exterior, all sorts of mayhem can be planned, without detection. This is a weapon that the most powerful men in history have learned to perfect. It was said that no one could read Franklin D. Roosevelt's face. Baron James Rothschild made a lifelong practice of disguising his real thoughts behind bland smiles and nondescript looks. Stendhal wrote of Talleyrand, "Never was a face less of a barometer." Henry Kissinger would bore his opponents around the negotiating table to tears with his monotonous voice, his blank look, his endless recitations of details; then, as their eyes glazed over, he would suddenly hit them with a list of bold terms. Caught off-guard, they would be easily intimidated. As one poker manual explains it, "While playing his hand, the good player is seldom an actor. Instead he practices a bland behavior that minimizes readable patterns, frustrates and confuses opponents, permits greater concentration."

An adaptable concept, the smoke screen can be practiced on a number of levels, all playing on the psychological principles of distraction and misdirection. One of the most effective smoke screens is the *noble gesture.* People want to believe apparently noble gestures are genuine, for the belief is pleasant. They rarely notice how deceptive these gestures can be.

The art dealer Joseph Duveen was once confronted with a terrible problem. The millionaires who had paid so dearly for Duveen's paintings were running out of wall space, and with inheritance taxes getting ever higher, it seemed unlikely that they would keep buying. The solution was the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., which Duveen helped create in 1937 by getting Andrew Mellon to donate his collection to it. The National Gallery was the perfect front for Duveen. In one gesture, his clients avoided taxes, cleared wall space for new purchases, and reduced the number of paintings on the market, maintaining the upward pressure on their prices. All this while the donors created the appearance of being public benefactors.

Another effective smoke screen is the *pattern,* the establishment of a series of actions that seduce the victim into believing you will continue in the same way. The pattern plays on the psychology of anticipation: Our behavior conforms to patterns, or so we like to think.

In 1878 the American robber baron Jay Gould created a company that began to threaten the monopoly of the telegraph company Western Union. The directors of Western Union decided to buy Gould's company up—

they had to spend a hefty sum, but they figured they had managed to rid themselves of an irritating competitor. A few months later, though, Gould was it at again, complaining he had been treated unfairly. He started up a second company to compete with Western Union and its new acquisition. The same thing happened again: Western Union bought him out to shut him up. Soon the pattern began for the third time, but now Gould went for the jugular: He suddenly staged a bloody takeover struggle and managed to gain complete control of Western Union. He had established a pattern that had tricked the company's directors into thinking his goal was to be bought out at a handsome rate. Once they paid him off, they relaxed and failed to notice that he was actually playing for higher stakes. The pattern is powerful in that it deceives the other person into expecting the opposite of what you are really doing.

Another psychological weakness on which to construct a smoke screen is the tendency to mistake appearances for reality—the feeling that if someone seems to belong to your group, their belonging must be real. This habit makes the *seamless blend* a very effective front. The trick is simple: You simply blend in with those around you. The better you blend, the less suspicious you become. During the Cold War of the 1950s and '60s, as is now notorious, a slew of British civil servants passed secrets to the Soviets. They went undetected for years because they were apparently decent chaps, had gone to all the right schools, and fit the old-boy network perfectly. Blending in is the perfect smoke screen for spying. The better you do it, the better you can conceal your intentions.

Remember: It takes patience and humility to dull your brilliant colors, to put on the mask of the inconspicuous. Do not despair at having to wear such a bland mask—it is often your unreadability that draws people to you and makes you appear a person of power.

Image: A Sheep's Skin.
A sheep never marauds,
a sheep never deceives,
a sheep is magnificently
dumb and docile. With a
sheepskin on his back,
a fox can pass right
into the chicken coop.

Authority: Have you ever heard of a skillful general, who intends to surprise a citadel, announcing his plan to his enemy? Conceal your purpose and hide your progress; do not disclose the extent of your designs until they cannot be opposed, until the combat is over. Win the victory before you declare the war. In a word, imitate those warlike people whose designs are not known except by the ravaged country through which they have passed. (Ninon de Lenclos, 1623–1706)

REVERSAL

No smoke screen, red herring, false sincerity, or any other diversionary device will succeed in concealing your intentions if you already have an established reputation for deception. And as you get older and achieve success, it often becomes increasingly difficult to disguise your cunning. Everyone knows you practice deception; persist in playing naive and you run the risk of seeming the rankest hypocrite, which will severely limit your room to maneuver. In such cases it is better to own up, to appear the honest rogue, or, better, the repentant rogue. Not only will you be admired for your frankness, but, most wonderful and strange of all, you will be able to continue your stratagems.

As P. T. Barnum, the nineteenth-century king of humbuggery, grew older, he learned to embrace his reputation as a grand deceiver. At one point he organized a buffalo hunt in New Jersey, complete with Indians and a few imported buffalo. He publicized the hunt as genuine, but it came off as so completely fake that the crowd, instead of getting angry and asking for their money back, was greatly amused. They knew Barnum pulled tricks all the time; that was the secret of his success, and they loved him for it. Learning a lesson from this affair, Barnum stopped concealing all of his devices, even revealing his deceptions in a tell-all autobiography. As Kierkegaard wrote, "The world wants to be deceived."

Finally, although it is wiser to divert attention from your purposes by presenting a bland, familiar exterior, there are times when the colorful, conspicuous gesture is the right diversionary tactic. The great charlatan mountebanks of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe used humor and entertainment to deceive their audiences. Dazzled by a great show, the public would not notice the charlatans' real intentions. Thus the star charlatan himself would appear in town in a night-black coach drawn by black horses. Clowns, tightrope walkers, and star entertainers would accompany him, pulling people in to his demonstrations of elixirs and quack potions. The charlatan made entertainment seem like the business of the day; the business of the day was actually the sale of the elixirs and quack potions.

Spectacle and entertainment, clearly, are excellent devices to conceal your intentions, but they cannot be used indefinitely. The public grows tired and suspicious, and eventually catches on to the trick. And indeed the charlatans had to move quickly from town to town, before word spread that the potions were useless and the entertainment a trick. Powerful people with bland exteriors, on the other hand—the Talleyrands, the Rothschilds, the Selassies—can practice their deceptions in the same place throughout their lifetimes. Their act never wears thin, and rarely causes suspicion. The colorful smoke screen should be used cautiously, then, and only when the occasion is right.

LAW

4

ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY

JUDGMENT

When you are trying to impress people with words, the more you say, the more common you appear, and the less in control. Even if you are saying something banal, it will seem original if you make it vague, open-ended, and sphinxlike. Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less. The more you say, the more likely you are to say something foolish.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Gnaeus Marcius, also known as Coriolanus, was a great military hero of ancient Rome. In the first half of the fifth century B.C. he won many important battles, saving the city from calamity time and time again. Because he spent most of his time on the battlefield, few Romans knew him personally, making him something of a legendary figure.

In 454 B.C., Coriolanus decided it was time to exploit his reputation and enter politics. He stood for election to the high rank of consul. Candidates for this position traditionally made a public address early in the race, and when Coriolanus came before the people, he began by displaying the dozens of scars he had accumulated over seventeen years of fighting for Rome. Few in the crowd really heard the lengthy speech that followed; those scars, proof of his valor and patriotism, moved the people to tears. Coriolanus's election seemed certain.

When the polling day arrived, however, Coriolanus made an entry into the forum escorted by the entire senate and by the city's patricians, the aristocracy. The common people who saw this were disturbed by such a blustering show of confidence on election day.

And then Coriolanus spoke again, mostly addressing the wealthy citizens who had accompanied him. His words were arrogant and insolent. Claiming certain victory in the vote, he boasted of his battlefield exploits, made sour jokes that appealed only to the patricians, voiced angry accusations against his opponents, and speculated on the riches he would bring to Rome. This time the people listened: They had not realized that this legendary soldier was also a common braggart.

News of Coriolanus's second speech spread quickly through Rome, and the people turned out in great numbers to make sure he was not elected. Defeated, Coriolanus returned to the battlefield, bitter and vowing revenge on the common folk who had voted against him. Some weeks later a large shipment of grain arrived in Rome. The senate was ready to distribute this food to the people, for free, but just as they were preparing to vote on the question Coriolanus appeared on the scene and took the senate floor. The distribution, he argued, would have a harmful effect on the city as a whole. Several senators appeared won over, and the vote on the distribution fell into doubt. Coriolanus did not stop there: He went on to condemn the concept of democracy itself. He advocated getting rid of the people's representatives—the tribunes—and turning over the governing of the city to the patricians.

When word of Coriolanus's latest speech reached the people, their anger knew no bounds. The tribunes were sent to the senate to demand that Coriolanus appear before them. He refused. Riots broke out all over the city. The senate, fearing the people's wrath, finally voted in favor of the grain distribution. The tribunes were appeased, but the people still demanded that Coriolanus speak to them and apologize. If he repented, and agreed to keep his opinions to himself, he would be allowed to return to the battlefield.

Coriolanus did appear one last time before the people, who listened to

Down on his luck, [the screenwriter] Michael Arlen went to New York in 1944. To drown his sorrows he paid a visit to the famous restaurant "21." In the lobby, he ran into Sam Goldwyn, who offered the somewhat impractical advice that he should buy racehorses. At the bar Arlen met Louis B. Mayer, an old acquaintance, who asked him what were his plans for the future. "I was just talking to Sam Goldwyn . . ." began Arlen. "How much did he offer you?" interrupted Mayer. "Not enough," he replied evasively. "Would you take fifteen thousand for thirty weeks?" asked Mayer. No hesitation this time. "Yes," said Arlen.

THE LITTLE, BROWN BOOK OF ANECDOTES, CLIFTON FADIMAN, ED., 1985

One oft-told tale about Kissinger . . . involved a report that Winston Lord had worked on for days. After giving it to Kissinger, he got it back with the notation, "Is this the best you can do?" Lord rewrote and polished and finally resubmitted it; back it came with the same curt question. After redrafting it one more time—and once again getting the same

him in rapt silence. He started slowly and softly, but as the speech went on, he became more and more blunt. Yet again he hurled insults! His tone was arrogant, his expression disdainful. The more he spoke, the angrier the people became. Finally they shouted him down and silenced him.

The tribunes conferred, condemned Coriolanus to death, and ordered the magistrates to take him at once to the top of the Tarpeian rock and throw him over. The delighted crowd seconded the decision. The patricians, however, managed to intervene, and the sentence was commuted to a lifelong banishment. When the people found out that Rome's great military hero would never return to the city, they celebrated in the streets. In fact no one had ever seen such a celebration, not even after the defeat of a foreign enemy.

question from Kissinger—Lord snapped, "Damn it, yes, it's the best I can do." To which Kissinger replied: "Fine, then I guess I'll read it this time."

KISSINGER, WALTER ISAACSON, 1992

Interpretation

Before his entrance into politics, the name of Coriolanus evoked awe.

His battlefield accomplishments showed him as a man of great bravery. Since the citizens knew little about him, all kinds of legends became attached to his name. The moment he appeared before the Roman citizens, however, and spoke his mind, all that grandeur and mystery vanished. He bragged and blustered like a common soldier. He insulted and slandered people, as if he felt threatened and insecure. Suddenly he was not at all what the people had imagined. The discrepancy between the legend and the reality proved immensely disappointing to those who wanted to believe in their hero. The more Coriolanus said, the less powerful he appeared—a person who cannot control his words shows that he cannot control himself, and is unworthy of respect.

Had Coriolanus said less, the people would never have had cause to be offended by him, would never have known his true feelings. He would have maintained his powerful aura, would certainly have been elected consul, and would have been able to accomplish his antidemocratic goals. But the human tongue is a beast that few can master. It strains constantly to break out of its cage, and if it is not tamed, it will run wild and cause you grief. Power cannot accrue to those who squander their treasure of words.

Oysters open completely when the moon is full; and when the crab sees one it throws a piece of stone or seaweed into it and the oyster cannot close again so that it serves the crab for meat. Such is the fate of him who opens his mouth too much and thereby puts himself at the mercy of the listener.

Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519

The King [Louis XIV] maintains the most impenetrable secrecy about affairs of State. The ministers attend council meetings, but he confides his plans to them only when he has reflected at length upon them and has come to a definite decision. I wish you might see the King. His expression is inscrutable; his eyes like those of a fox. He never discusses State affairs except with his ministers in Council. When he speaks to courtiers he refers only to their respective prerogatives or duties. Even the most frivolous of his utterances has the air of being the pronouncement of an oracle.

PRIMI VISCONTI, QUOTED IN LOUIS XIV, LOUIS BERTRAND, 1928

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In the court of Louis XIV, nobles and ministers would spend days and nights debating issues of state. They would confer, argue, make and break alliances, and argue again, until finally the critical moment arrived: Two of them would be chosen to represent the different sides to Louis himself, who would decide what should be done. After these persons were chosen,

everyone would argue some more: How should the issues be phrased? What would appeal to Louis, what would annoy him? At what time of day should the representatives approach him, and in what part of the Versailles palace? What expression should they have on their faces?

Finally, after all this was settled, the fateful moment would finally arrive. The two men would approach Louis—always a delicate matter—and when they finally had his ear, they would talk about the issue at hand, spelling out the options in detail.

Louis would listen in silence, a most enigmatic look on his face. Finally, when each had finished his presentation and had asked for the king's opinion, he would look at them both and say, "I shall see." Then he would walk away.

The ministers and courtiers would never hear another word on this subject from the king—they would simply see the result, weeks later, when he would come to a decision and act. He would never bother to consult them on the matter again.

Undutiful words of a subject do often take deeper root than the memory of ill deeds. . . . The late Earl of Essex told Queen Elizabeth that her conditions were as crooked as her carcass; but it cost him his head, which his insurrection had not cost him but for that speech.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH, 1554–1618

Interpretation

Louis XIV was a man of very few words. His most famous remark is *"L'état, c'est moi"* ("I am the state"); nothing could be more pithy yet more eloquent. His infamous "I shall see" was one of several extremely short phrases that he would apply to all manner of requests.

Louis was not always this way; as a young man he was known for talking at length, delighting in his own eloquence. His later taciturnity was self-imposed, an act, a mask he used to keep everybody below him off-balance. No one knew exactly where he stood, or could predict his reactions. No one could try to deceive him by saying what they thought he wanted to hear, because no one *knew* what he wanted to hear. As they talked on and on to the silent Louis, they revealed more and more about themselves, information he would later use against them to great effect.

In the end, Louis's silence kept those around him terrified and under his thumb. It was one of the foundations of his power. As Saint-Simon wrote, "No one knew as well as he how to sell his words, his smile, even his glances. Everything in him was valuable because he created differences, and his majesty was enhanced by the sparseness of his words."

It is even more damaging for a minister to say foolish things than to do them.
Cardinal de Retz, 1613–1679

KEYS TO POWER

Power is in many ways a game of appearances, and when you say less than necessary, you inevitably appear greater and more powerful than you are. Your silence will make other people uncomfortable. Humans are machines of interpretation and explanation; they have to know what you are thinking. When you carefully control what you reveal, they cannot pierce your intentions or your meaning.

Your short answers and silences will put them on the defensive, and they will jump in, nervously filling the silence with all kinds of comments that will reveal valuable information about them and their weaknesses. They will leave a meeting with you feeling as if they had been robbed, and they will go home and ponder your every word. This extra attention to your brief comments will only add to your power.

Saying less than necessary is not for kings and statesmen only. In most areas of life, the less you say, the more profound and mysterious you appear. As a young man, the artist Andy Warhol had the revelation that it was generally impossible to get people to do what you wanted them to do by talking to them. They would turn against you, subvert your wishes, disobey you out of sheer perversity. He once told a friend, "I learned that you actually have more power when you shut up."

In his later life Warhol employed this strategy with great success. His interviews were exercises in oracular speech: He would say something vague and ambiguous, and the interviewer would twist in circles trying to figure it out, imagining there was something profound behind his often meaningless phrases. Warhol rarely talked about his work; he let others do the interpreting. He claimed to have learned this technique from that master of enigma Marcel Duchamp, another twentieth-century artist who realized early on that the less he said about his work, the more people talked about it. And the more they talked, the more valuable his work became.

By saying less than necessary you create the appearance of meaning and power. Also, the less you say, the less risk you run of saying something foolish, even dangerous. In 1825 a new czar, Nicholas I, ascended the throne of Russia. A rebellion immediately broke out, led by liberals demanding that the country modernize—that its industries and civil structures catch up with the rest of Europe. Brutally crushing this rebellion (the Decembrist Uprising), Nicholas I sentenced one of its leaders, Kondraty Ryleyev, to death. On the day of the execution Ryleyev stood on the gallows, the noose around his neck. The trapdoor opened—but as Ryleyev dangled, the rope broke, dashing him to the ground. At the time, events like this were considered signs of providence or heavenly will, and a man saved from execution this way was usually pardoned. As Ryleyev got to his feet, bruised and dirtied but believing his neck had been saved, he called out to the crowd, "You see, in Russia they don't know how to do anything properly, not even how to make rope!"

A messenger immediately went to the Winter Palace with news of the failed hanging. Vexed by this disappointing turnabout, Nicholas I nevertheless began to sign the pardon. But then: "Did Ryleyev say anything after this miracle?" the czar asked the messenger. "Sire," the messenger replied, "he said that in Russia they don't even know how to make rope."

"In that case," said the Czar, "let us prove the contrary," and he tore up the pardon. The next day Ryleyev was hanged again. This time the rope did not break.

Learn the lesson: Once the words are out, you cannot take them back. Keep them under control. Be particularly careful with sarcasm: The mo-

mentary satisfaction you gain with your biting words will be outweighed by the price you pay.

I m a g e :
The Oracle at Delphi.
When visitors consulted the
Oracle, the priestess would utter
a few enigmatic words that seemed
full of meaning and import. No one
disobeyed the words of the Oracle—
they held power over life and death.

> Authority: Never start moving your own lips and teeth before the subordinates do. The longer I keep quiet, the sooner others move their lips and teeth. As they move their lips and teeth, I can thereby understand their real intentions. . . . If the sovereign is not mysterious, the ministers will find opportunity to take and take. (Han-fei-tzu, Chinese philosopher, third century B.C.)

REVERSAL

There are times when it is unwise to be silent. Silence can arouse suspicion and even insecurity, especially in your superiors; a vague or ambiguous comment can open you up to interpretations you had not bargained for. Silence and saying less than necessary must be practiced with caution, then, and in the right situations. It is occasionally wiser to imitate the court jester, who plays the fool but knows he is smarter than the king. He talks and talks and entertains, and no one suspects that he is more than just a fool.

Also, words can sometimes act as a kind of smoke screen for any deception you might practice. By bending your listener's ear with talk, you can distract and mesmerize them; the more you talk, in fact, the less suspicious of you they become. The verbose are not perceived as sly and manipulative but as helpless and unsophisticated. This is the reverse of the silent policy employed by the powerful: By talking more, and making yourself appear weaker and less intelligent than your mark, you can practice deception with greater ease.

LAW

5

SO MUCH DEPENDS ON REPUTATION—GUARD IT WITH YOUR LIFE

JUDGMENT

Reputation is the cornerstone of power. Through reputation alone you can intimidate and win; once it slips, however, you are vulnerable, and will be attacked on all sides. Make your reputation unassailable. Always be alert to potential attacks and thwart them before they happen. Meanwhile, learn to destroy your enemies by opening holes in their own reputations. Then stand aside and let public opinion hang them.

THE ANIMALS STRICKEN WITH THE PLAGUE

A frightful epidemic sent
To earth by Heaven intent to vent
Its fury on a sinful world, to call
It by its rightful name, the pestilence,
That Acheron-filling vial of virulence
Had fallen on every animal.
Not all were dead, but all lay near to dying,
And none was any longer trying
To find new fuel to feed life's flickering fires.
No foods excited their desires;
No more did wolves and foxes rove
In search of harmless, helpless prey;
And dove would not consort with dove,
For love and joy had flown away.
The Lion assumed the chair to say: "Dear friends,
I doubt not it's for heaven's high ends
That on us sinners woe must fall.
Let him of us who's sinned the most
Fall victim to the avenging heavenly host,
And may he win salvation for us all;
For history teaches us that in these crises
We must make sacrifices.
Undeceived and stern-eyed, let's inspect
Our conscience. As I recollect,
To put my greedy appetite to sleep,
I've banqueted on

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW I

During China's War of the Three Kingdoms (A.D. 207–265), the great general Chuko Liang, leading the forces of the Shu Kingdom, dispatched his vast army to a distant camp while he rested in a small town with a handful of soldiers. Suddenly sentinels hurried in with the alarming news that an enemy force of over 150,000 troops under Sima Yi was approaching. With only a hundred men to defend him, Chuko Liang's situation was hopeless. The enemy would finally capture this renowned leader.

Without lamenting his fate, or wasting time trying to figure out how he had been caught, Liang ordered his troops to take down their flags, throw open the city gates, and hide. He himself then took a seat on the most visible part of the city's wall, wearing a Taoist robe. He lit some incense, strummed his lute, and began to chant. Minutes later he could see the vast enemy army approaching, an endless phalanx of soldiers. Pretending not to notice them, he continued to sing and play the lute.

Soon the army stood at the town gates. At its head was Sima Yi, who instantly recognized the man on the wall.

Even so, as his soldiers itched to enter the unguarded town through its open gates, Sima Yi hesitated, held them back, and studied Liang on the wall. Then, he ordered an immediate and speedy retreat.

Interpretation

Chuko Liang was commonly known as the "Sleeping Dragon." His exploits in the War of the Three Kingdoms were legendary. Once a man claiming to be a disaffected enemy lieutenant came to his camp, offering help and information. Liang instantly recognized the situation as a setup; this man was a false deserter, and should be beheaded. At the last minute, though, as the ax was about to fall, Liang stopped the execution and offered to spare the man's life if he agreed to become a double agent. Grateful and terrified, the man agreed, and began supplying false information to the enemy. Liang won battle after battle.

On another occasion Liang stole a military seal and created false documents dispatching his enemy's troops to distant locations. Once the troops had dispersed, he was able to capture three cities, so that he controlled an entire corridor of the enemy's kingdom. He also once tricked the enemy into believing one of its best generals was a traitor, forcing the man to escape and join forces with Liang. The Sleeping Dragon carefully cultivated his reputation of being the cleverest man in China, one who always had a trick up his sleeve. As powerful as any weapon, this reputation struck fear into his enemy.

Sima Yi had fought against Chuko Liang dozens of times and knew him well. When he came on the empty city, with Liang praying on the wall, he was stunned. The Taoist robes, the chanting, the incense—this had to be a game of intimidation. The man was obviously taunting him, daring him to walk into a trap. The game was so obvious that for one moment it crossed Yi's mind that Liang actually *was* alone, and desperate. But so great was his fear of Liang that he dared not risk finding out. Such is the

power of reputation. It can put a vast army on the defensive, even force them into retreat, without a single arrow being fired.

For, as Cicero says, even those who argue against fame still want the books they write against it to bear their name in the title and hope to become famous for despising it. Everything else is subject to barter: we will let our friends have our goods and our lives if need be; but a case of sharing our fame and making someone else the gift of our reputation is hardly to be found.
Montaigne, 1533–1592

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW II

In 1841 the young P. T. Barnum, trying to establish his reputation as America's premier showman, decided to purchase the American Museum in Manhattan and turn it into a collection of curiosities that would secure his fame. The problem was that he had no money. The museum's asking price was $15,000, but Barnum was able to put together a proposal that appealed to the institution's owners even though it replaced cash up front with dozens of guarantees and references. The owners came to a verbal agreement with Barnum, but at the last minute, the principal partner changed his mind, and the museum and its collection were sold to the directors of Peale's Museum. Barnum was infuriated, but the partner explained that business was business—the museum had been sold to Peale's because Peale's had a reputation and Barnum had none.

Barnum immediately decided that if he had no reputation to bank on, his only recourse was to ruin the reputation of Peale's. Accordingly he launched a letter-writing campaign in the newspapers, calling the owners a bunch of "broken-down bank directors" who had no idea how to run a museum or entertain people. He warned the public against buying Peale's stock, since the business's purchase of another museum would invariably spread its resources thin. The campaign was effective, the stock plummeted, and with no more confidence in Peale's track record and reputation, the owners of the American Museum reneged on their deal and sold the whole thing to Barnum.

It took years for Peale's to recover, and they never forgot what Barnum had done. Mr. Peale himself decided to attack Barnum by building a reputation for "high-brow entertainment," promoting his museum's programs as more scientific than those of his vulgar competitor. Mesmerism (hypnotism) was one of Peale's "scientific" attractions, and for a while it drew big crowds and was quite successful. To fight back, Barnum decided to attack Peale's reputation yet again.

Barnum organized a rival mesmeric performance in which he himself apparently put a little girl into a trance. Once she seemed to have fallen deeply under, he tried to hypnotize members of the audience—but no matter how hard he tried, none of the spectators fell under his spell, and many of them began to laugh. A frustrated Barnum finally announced that to prove the little girl's trance was real, he would cut off one of her fingers

many a sheep
Who'd injured me in
no respect,
And even in my time
been known to try
Shepherd pie.
If need be, then, I'll die.
Yet I suspect
That others also ought
to own their sins.
It's only fair that all
should do their best
To single out the
guiltiest."
"Sire, you're too good
a king," the Fox begins;
"Such scruples are too
delicate. My word,
To eat sheep, that
profane and vulgar
herd,
That's sin? Nay, Sire,
enough for such a crew
To be devoured by
such as you;
While of the shepherds
we may say
That they deserved the
worst they got,
Theirs being the lot
that over us beasts plot
A flimsy dream-
begotten sway."
Thus spake the Fox,
and toady cheers rose
high,
While none dared cast
too cold an eye
On Tiger's, Bear's, and
other eminences'
Most unpardonable
offences.
Each, of never mind
what currish breed,
Was really a saint, they
all agreed.
Then came the Ass, to
say: "I do recall
How once I crossed an
abbey-mead
Where hunger, grass in
plenty, and withal,
I have no doubt, some
imp of greed,
Assailed me, and I
shaved a tongue's-
breadth wide
Where frankly I'd no
right to any grass."

without her noticing. But as he sharpened the knife, the little girl's eyes popped open and she ran away, to the audience's delight. He repeated this and other parodies for several weeks. Soon no one could take Peale's show seriously, and attendance went way down. Within a few weeks, the show closed. Over the next few years Barnum established a reputation for audacity and consummate showmanship that lasted his whole life. Peale's reputation, on the other hand, never recovered.

All forthwith fell full cry upon the Ass: A Wolf of some book-learning testified That that curst beast must suffer their despite, That gallskinned author of their piteous plight. They judged him fit for nought but gallows-bait: How vile, another's grass to sequestrate! His death alone could expiate A crime so heinous, as full well he learns. The court, as you're of great or poor estate, Will paint you either white or black by turns.

THE BEST FABLES OF LA FONTAINE, JEAN DE LA FONTAINE, 1621–1695

Interpretation

Barnum used two different tactics to ruin Peale's reputation. The first was simple: He sowed doubts about the museum's stability and solvency. Doubt is a powerful weapon: Once you let it out of the bag with insidious rumors, your opponents are in a horrible dilemma. On the one hand they can deny the rumors, even prove that you have slandered them. But a layer of suspicion will remain: Why are they defending themselves so desperately? Maybe the rumor has some truth to it? If, on the other hand, they take the high road and ignore you, the doubts, unrefuted, will be even stronger. If done correctly, the sowing of rumors can so infuriate and unsettle your rivals that in defending themselves they will make numerous mistakes. This is the perfect weapon for those who have no reputation of their own to work from.

Once Barnum did have a reputation of his own, he used the second, gentler tactic, the fake hypnotism demonstration: He ridiculed his rivals' reputation. This too was extremely successful. Once you have a solid base of respect, ridiculing your opponent both puts him on the defensive and draws more attention to you, enhancing your own reputation. Outright slander and insult are too strong at this point; they are ugly, and may hurt you more than help you. But gentle barbs and mockery suggest that you have a strong enough sense of your own worth to enjoy a good laugh at your rival's expense. A humorous front can make you out as a harmless entertainer while poking holes in the reputation of your rival.

It is easier to cope with a bad conscience than with a bad reputation.
Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844–1900

KEYS TO POWER

The people around us, even our closest friends, will always to some extent remain mysterious and unfathomable. Their characters have secret recesses that they never reveal. The unknowableness of other people could prove disturbing if we thought about it long enough, since it would make it impossible for us really to judge other people. So we prefer to ignore this fact, and to judge people on their appearances, on what is most visible to our eyes—clothes, gestures, words, actions. In the social realm, appearances are the barometer of almost all of our judgments, and you must never be misled into believing otherwise. One false slip, one awkward or sudden change in your appearance, can prove disastrous.

This is the reason for the supreme importance of making and maintaining a reputation that is of your own creation.

That reputation will protect you in the dangerous game of appearances, distracting the probing eyes of others from knowing what you are really like, and giving you a degree of control over how the world judges you—a powerful position to be in. Reputation has a power like magic: With one stroke of its wand, it can double your strength. It can also send people scurrying away from you. Whether the exact same deeds appear brilliant or dreadful can depend entirely on the reputation of the doer.

In the ancient Chinese court of the Wei kingdom there was a man named Mi Tzu-hsia who had a reputation for supreme civility and graciousness. He became the ruler's favorite. It was a law in Wei that "whoever rides secretly in the ruler's coach shall have his feet cut off," but when Mi Tzu-hsia's mother fell ill, he used the royal coach to visit her, pretending that the ruler had given him permission. When the ruler found out, he said, "How dutiful is Mi Tzu-hsia! For his mother's sake he even forgot that he was committing a crime making him liable to lose his feet!"

Another time the two of them took a stroll in an orchard. Mi Tzu-hsia began eating a peach that he could not finish, and he gave the ruler the other half to eat. The ruler remarked, "You love me so much that you would even forget your own saliva taste and let me eat the rest of the peach!"

Later, however, envious fellow courtiers, spreading word that Mi Tzu-hsia was actually devious and arrogant, succeeded in damaging his reputation; the ruler came to see his actions in a new light. "This fellow once rode in my coach under pretense of my order," he told the courtiers angrily, "and another time he gave me a half-eaten peach." For the same actions that had charmed the ruler when he was the favorite, Mi Tzu-hsia now had to suffer the penalties. The fate of his feet depended solely on the strength of his reputation.

In the beginning, you must work to establish a reputation for one outstanding quality, whether generosity or honesty or cunning. This quality sets you apart and gets other people to talk about you. You then make your reputation known to as many people as possible (subtly, though; take care to build slowly, and with a firm foundation), and watch as it spreads like wildfire.

A solid reputation increases your presence and exaggerates your strengths without your having to spend much energy. It can also create an aura around you that will instill respect, even fear. In the fighting in the North African desert during World War II, the German general Erwin Rommel had a reputation for cunning and for deceptive maneuvering that struck terror into everyone who faced him. Even when his forces were depleted, and when British tanks outnumbered his by five to one, entire cities would be evacuated at the news of his approach.

As they say, your reputation inevitably precedes you, and if it inspires respect, a lot of your work is done for you before you arrive on the scene, or utter a single word.

Your success seems destined by your past triumphs. Much of the suc-

cess of Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy rested on his reputation for ironing out differences; no one wanted to be seen as so unreasonable that Kissinger could not sway him. A peace treaty seemed a fait accompli as soon as Kissinger's name became involved in the negotiations.

Make your reputation simple and base it on one sterling quality. This single quality—efficiency, say, or seductiveness—becomes a kind of calling card that announces your presence and places others under a spell. A reputation for honesty will allow you to practice all manner of deception. Casanova used his reputation as a great seducer to pave the way for his future conquests; women who had heard of his powers became immensely curious, and wanted to discover for themselves what had made him so romantically successful.

Perhaps you have already stained your reputation, so that you are prevented from establishing a new one. In such cases it is wise to associate with someone whose image counteracts your own, using their good name to whitewash and elevate yours. It is hard, for example, to erase a reputation for dishonesty by yourself; but a paragon of honesty can help. When P. T. Barnum wanted to clean up a reputation for promoting vulgar entertainment, he brought the singer Jenny Lind over from Europe. She had a stellar, high-class reputation, and the American tour Barnum sponsored for her greatly enhanced his own image. Similarly the great robber barons of nineteenth-century America were long unable to rid themselves of a reputation for cruelty and mean-spiritedness. Only when they began collecting art, so that the names of Morgan and Frick became permanently associated with those of da Vinci and Rembrandt, were they able to soften their unpleasant image.

Reputation is a treasure to be carefully collected and hoarded. Especially when you are first establishing it, you must protect it strictly, anticipating all attacks on it. Once it is solid, do not let yourself get angry or defensive at the slanderous comments of your enemies—that reveals insecurity, not confidence in your reputation. Take the high road instead, and never appear desperate in your self-defense. On the other hand, an attack on another man's reputation is a potent weapon, particularly when you have less power than he does. He has much more to lose in such a battle, and your own thus-far-small reputation gives him a small target when he tries to return your fire. Barnum used such campaigns to great effect in his early career. But this tactic must be practiced with skill; you must not seem to engage in petty vengeance. If you do not break your enemy's reputation cleverly, you will inadvertently ruin your own.

Thomas Edison, considered the inventor who harnessed electricity, believed that a workable system would have to be based on direct current (DC). When the Serbian scientist Nikola Tesla appeared to have succeeded in creating a system based on alternating current (AC), Edison was furious. He determined to ruin Tesla's reputation, by making the public believe that the AC system was inherently unsafe, and Tesla irresponsible in promoting it.

To this end he captured all kinds of household pets and electrocuted

them to death with an AC current. When this wasn't enough, in 1890 he got New York State prison authorities to organize the world's first execution by electrocution, using an AC current. But Edison's electrocution experiments had all been with small creatures; the charge was too weak, and the man was only half killed. In perhaps the country's cruelest state-authorized execution, the procedure had to be repeated. It was an awful spectacle.

Although, in the long run, it is Edison's name that has survived, at the time his campaign damaged his own reputation more than Tesla's. He backed off. The lesson is simple—never go too far in attacks like these, for that will draw more attention to your own vengefulness than to the person you are slandering. When your own reputation is solid, use subtler tactics, such as satire and ridicule, to weaken your opponent while making you out as a charming rogue. The mighty lion toys with the mouse that crosses his path—any other reaction would mar his fearsome reputation.

Image:
A Mine Full of
Diamonds and Rubies.
You dug for it, you found it,
and your wealth is now assured.
Guard it with your life. Robbers and thieves
will appear from all sides. Never take your wealth
for granted, and constantly renew it—time
will diminish the jewels' luster,
and bury them from sight.

Authority: Therefore I should wish our courtier to bolster up his inherent worth with skill and cunning, and ensure that whenever he has to go where he is a stranger, he is preceded by a good reputation. . . . For the fame which appears to rest on the opinions of many fosters a certain unshakable belief in a man's worth which is then easily strengthened in minds already thus disposed and prepared. (Baldassare Castiglione, 1478–1529)

REVERSAL

There is no possible Reversal. Reputation is critical; there are no exceptions to this law. Perhaps, not caring what others think of you, you gain a reputation for insolence and arrogance, but that can be a valuable image in itself—Oscar Wilde used it to great advantage. Since we must live in society and must depend on the opinions of others, there is nothing to be gained by neglecting your reputation. By not caring how you are perceived, you let others decide this for you. Be the master of your fate, and also of your reputation.

LAW

6

COURT ATTENTION AT ALL COST

JUDGMENT

Everything is judged by its appearance; what is unseen counts for nothing. Never let yourself get lost in the crowd, then, or buried in oblivion. Stand out. Be conspicuous, at all cost. Make yourself a magnet of attention by appearing larger, more colorful, more mysterious than the bland and timid masses.

PART I: SURROUND YOUR NAME WITH THE SENSATIONAL AND SCANDALOUS

Draw attention to yourself by creating an unforgettable, even controversial image. Court scandal. Do anything to make yourself seem larger than life and shine more brightly than those around you. Make no distinction between kinds of attention—notoriety of any sort will bring you power. Better to be slandered and attacked than ignored.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

P. T. Barnum, America's premier nineteenth-century showman, started his career as an assistant to the owner of a circus, Aaron Turner. In 1836 the circus stopped in Annapolis, Maryland, for a series of performances. On the morning of opening day, Barnum took a stroll through town, wearing a new black suit. People started to follow him. Someone in the gathering crowd shouted out that he was the Reverend Ephraim K. Avery, infamous as a man acquitted of the charge of murder but still believed guilty by most Americans. The angry mob tore off Barnum's suit and was ready to lynch him. After desperate appeals, Barnum finally convinced them to follow him to the circus, where he could verify his identity.

Once there, old Turner confirmed that this was all a practical joke—he himself had spread the rumor that Barnum was Avery. The crowd dispersed, but Barnum, who had nearly been killed, was not amused. He wanted to know what could have induced his boss to play such a trick. "My dear Mr. Barnum," Turner replied, "it was all for our good. Remember, all we need to ensure success is notoriety." And indeed everyone in town was talking about the joke, and the circus was packed that night and every night it stayed in Annapolis. Barnum had learned a lesson he would never forget.

Barnum's first big venture of his own was the American Museum—a collection of curiosities, located in New York. One day a beggar approached Barnum in the street. Instead of giving him money, Barnum decided to employ him. Taking him back to the museum, he gave the man five bricks and told him to make a slow circuit of several blocks. At certain points he was to lay down a brick on the sidewalk, always keeping one brick in hand. On the return journey he was to replace each brick on the street with the one he held. Meanwhile he was to remain serious of countenance and to answer no questions. Once back at the museum, he was to enter, walk around inside, then leave through the back door and make the same bricklaying circuit again.

On the man's first walk through the streets, several hundred people watched his mysterious movements. By his fourth circuit, onlookers swarmed around him, debating what he was doing. Every time he entered the museum he was followed by people who bought tickets to keep watching him. Many of them were distracted by the museum's collections, and stayed inside. By the end of the first day, the brick man had drawn over a

THE WASP AND THE PRINCE

A wasp named Pin Tail was long in quest of some deed that would make him forever famous. So one day he entered the king's palace and stung the little prince, who was in bed. The prince awoke with loud cries. The king and his courtiers rushed in to see what had happened. The prince was yelling as the wasp stung him again and again. The courtiers tried to catch the wasp, and each in turn was stung. The whole royal household rushed in, the news soon spread, and people flocked to the palace. The city was in an uproar, all business suspended. Said the wasp to itself, before it expired from its efforts, "A name without fame is like fire without flame. There is nothing like attracting notice at any cost."

INDIAN FABLE

thousand people into the museum. A few days later the police ordered him to cease and desist from his walks—the crowds were blocking traffic. The bricklaying stopped but thousands of New Yorkers had entered the museum, and many of those had become P. T. Barnum converts.

Even when I'm railed at, I get my quota of renown.

PIETRO ARETINO, 1492–1556

Barnum would put a band of musicians on a balcony overlooking the street, beneath a huge banner proclaiming FREE MUSIC FOR THE MILLIONS. What generosity, New Yorkers thought, and they flocked to hear the free concerts. But Barnum took pains to hire the worst musicians he could find, and soon after the band struck up, people would hurry to buy tickets to the museum, where they would be out of earshot of the band's noise, and of the booing of the crowd.

One of the first oddities Barnum toured around the country was Joice Heth, a woman he claimed was 161 years old, and whom he advertised as a slave who had once been George Washington's nurse. After several months the crowds began to dwindle, so Barnum sent an anonymous letter to the papers, claiming that Heth was a clever fraud. "Joice Heth," he wrote, "is not a human being but an automaton, made up of whalebone, india-rubber, and numberless springs." Those who had not bothered to see her before were immediately curious, and those who had already seen her paid to see her again, to find out whether the rumor that she was a robot was true.

THE COURT ARTIST

A work that was voluntarily presented to a prince was bound to seem in some way special. The artist himself might also try to attract the attention of the court through his behaviour. In Vasari's judgment Sodoma was "well known both for his personal eccentricities and for his reputation as a good painter." Because Pope Leo X "found pleasure in such strange, hare-brained individuals," he made Sodoma a knight, causing the artist to go completely out of his mind. Van Mander found it odd that the products of Cornelis Ketel's experiments in mouth and foot painting were bought by notable persons "because of their oddity," yet Ketel was only adding a variation to similar experiments by Titian, Ugo da Carpi and Palma Giovane, who, according to Boschini painted with their fingers "because they wished to imitate the method used by the Supreme Creator." Van Mander

In 1842, Barnum purchased the carcass of what was purported to be a mermaid. This creature resembled a monkey with the body of a fish, but the head and body were perfectly joined—it was truly a wonder. After some research Barnum discovered that the creature had been expertly put together in Japan, where the hoax had caused quite a stir.

He nevertheless planted articles in newspapers around the country claiming the capture of a mermaid in the Fiji Islands. He also sent the papers woodcut prints of paintings showing mermaids. By the time he showed the specimen in his museum, a national debate had been sparked over the existence of these mythical creatures. A few months before Barnum's campaign, no one had cared or even known about mermaids; now everyone was talking about them as if they were real. Crowds flocked in record numbers to see the Fiji Mermaid, and to hear debates on the subject.

A few years later, Barnum toured Europe with General Tom Thumb, a five-year-old dwarf from Connecticut whom Barnum claimed was an eleven-year-old English boy, and whom he had trained to do many remarkable acts. During this tour Barnum's name attracted such attention that Queen Victoria, that paragon of sobriety, requested a private audience with him and his talented dwarf at Buckingham Palace. The English press may have ridiculed Barnum, but Victoria was royally entertained by him, and respected him ever after.

Interpretation

Barnum understood the fundamental truth about attracting attention: Once people's eyes are on you, you have a special legitimacy. For Barnum,

creating interest meant creating a crowd; as he later wrote, "Every crowd has a silver lining." And crowds tend to act in conjunction. If one person stops to see your beggarman laying bricks in the street, more will do the same. They will gather like dust bunnies. Then, given a gentle push, they will enter your museum or watch your show. To create a crowd you have to do something different and odd. Any kind of curiosity will serve the purpose, for crowds are magnetically attracted by the unusual and inexplicable. And once you have their attention, never let it go. If it veers toward other people, it does so at your expense. Barnum would ruthlessly suck attention from his competitors, knowing what a valuable commodity it is.

At the beginning of your rise to the top, then, spend all your energy on attracting attention. Most important: The *quality* of the attention is irrelevant. No matter how badly his shows were reviewed, or how slanderously personal were the attacks on his hoaxes, Barnum would never complain. If a newspaper critic reviled him particularly badly, in fact, he made sure to invite the man to an opening and to give him the best seat in the house. He would even write anonymous attacks on his own work, just to keep his name in the papers. From Barnum's vantage, attention—whether negative or positive—was the main ingredient of his success. The worst fate in the world for a man who yearns fame, glory, and, of course, power is to be ignored.

If the courtier happens to engage in arms in some public spectacle such as jousting . . . he will ensure that the horse he has is beautifully caparisoned, that he himself is suitably attired, with appropriate mottoes and ingenious devices to attract the eyes of the onlookers in his direction as surely as the lodestone attracts iron.

Baldassare Castiglione, 1478–1529

KEYS TO POWER

Burning more brightly than those around you is a skill that no one is born with. You have to *learn* to attract attention, "as surely as the lodestone attracts iron." At the start of your career, you must attach your name and reputation to a quality, an image, that sets you apart from other people. This image can be something like a characteristic style of dress, or a personality quirk that amuses people and gets talked about. Once the image is established, you have an appearance, a place in the sky for your star.

It is a common mistake to imagine that this peculiar appearance of yours should not be controversial, that to be attacked is somehow bad. Nothing could be further from the truth. To avoid being a flash in the pan, and having your notoriety eclipsed by another, you must not discriminate between different types of attention; in the end, every kind will work in your favor. Barnum, we have seen, welcomed personal attacks and felt no need to defend himself. He deliberately courted the image of being a humbug.

reports that Gossaert attracted the attention of Emperor Charles V by wearing a fantastic paper costume. In doing so he was adopting the tactics used by Dinocrates, who, in order to gain access to Alexander the Great, is said to have appeared disguised as the naked Hercules when the monarch was sitting in judgment.

THE COURT ARTIST, MARTIN WARNKE, 1993

The court of Louis XIV contained many talented writers, artists, great beauties, and men and women of impeccable virtue, but no one was more talked about than the singular Duc de Lauzun. The duke was short, almost dwarfish, and he was prone to the most insolent kinds of behavior—he slept with the king's mistress, and openly insulted not only other courtiers but the king himself. Louis, however, was so beguiled by the duke's eccentricities that he could not bear his absences from the court. It was simple: The strangeness of the duke's character attracted attention. Once people were enthralled by him, they wanted him around at any cost.

Society craves larger-than-life figures, people who stand above the general mediocrity. Never be afraid, then, of the qualities that set you apart and draw attention to you. Court controversy, even scandal. It is better to be attacked, even slandered, than ignored. All professions are ruled by this law, and all professionals must have a bit of the showman about them.

The great scientist Thomas Edison knew that to raise money he had to remain in the public eye at any cost. Almost as important as the inventions themselves was how he presented them to the public and courted attention.

Edison would design visually dazzling experiments to display his discoveries with electricity. He would talk of future inventions that seemed fantastic at the time—robots, and machines that could photograph thought—and that he had no intention of wasting his energy on, but that made the public talk about him. He did everything he could to make sure that he received more attention than his great rival Nikola Tesla, who may actually have been more brilliant than he was but whose name was far less known. In 1915, it was rumored that Edison and Tesla would be joint recipients of that year's Nobel Prize in physics. The prize was eventually given to a pair of English physicists; only later was it discovered that the prize committee had actually approached Edison, but he had turned them down, refusing to share the prize with Tesla. By that time his fame was more secure than Tesla's, and he thought it better to refuse the honor than to allow his rival the attention that would have come even from sharing the prize.

If you find yourself in a lowly position that offers little opportunity for you to draw attention, an effective trick is to attack the most visible, most famous, most powerful person you can find. When Pietro Aretino, a young Roman servant boy of the early sixteenth century, wanted to get attention as a writer of verses, he decided to publish a series of satirical poems ridiculing the pope and his affection for a pet elephant. The attack put Aretino in the public eye immediately. A slanderous attack on a person in a position of power would have a similar effect. Remember, however, to use such tactics sparingly after you have the public's attention, when the act can wear thin.

Once in the limelight you must constantly renew it by adapting and varying your method of courting attention. If you don't, the public will grow tired, will take you for granted, and will move on to a newer star. The game requires constant vigilance and creativity. Pablo Picasso never allowed himself to fade into the background; if his name became too at-

tached to a particular style, he would deliberately upset the public with a new series of paintings that went against all expectations. Better to create something ugly and disturbing, he believed, than to let viewers grow too familiar with his work. Understand: People feel superior to the person whose actions they can predict. If you show them who is in control by playing *against* their expectations, you both gain their respect and tighten your hold on their fleeting attention.

I m a g e :
The Limelight. The
actor who steps into this brilliant light attains a heightened
presence. All eyes are on him. There
is room for only one actor at a time in
the limelight's narrow beam; do whatever it takes to make yourself its focus.
Make your gestures so large, amusing, and scandalous that the
light stays on you while the
other actors are left in
the shadows.

Authority: Be ostentatious and be seen. . . . What is not seen is as though it did not exist. . . . It was light that first caused all creation to shine forth. Display fills up many blanks, covers up deficiencies, and gives everything a second life, especially when it is backed by genuine merit. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

PART II: CREATE AN AIR OF MYSTERY

In a world growing increasingly banal and familiar, what seems enigmatic instantly draws attention. Never make it too clear what you are doing or about to do. Do not show all your cards. An air of mystery heightens your presence; it also creates anticipation—everyone will be watching you to see what happens next. Use mystery to beguile, seduce, even frighten.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Beginning in 1905, rumors started to spread throughout Paris of a young Oriental girl who danced in a private home, wrapped in veils that she gradually discarded. A local journalist who had seen her dancing reported that "a woman from the Far East had come to Europe laden with perfume and jewels, to introduce some of the richness of the Oriental colour and life into the satiated society of European cities." Soon everyone knew the dancer's name: Mata Hari.

Early that year, in the winter, small and select audiences would gather in a salon filled with Indian statues and other relics while an orchestra played music inspired by Hindu and Javanese melodies. After keeping the audience waiting and wondering, Mata Hari would suddenly appear, in a startling costume: a white cotton brassiere covered with Indian-type jewels; jeweled bands at the waist supporting a sarong that revealed as much as it concealed; bracelets up the arms. Then Mata Hari would dance, in a style no one in France had seen before, her whole body swaying as if she were in a trance. She told her excited and curious audience that her dances told stories from Indian mythology and Javanese folktales. Soon the cream of Paris, and ambassadors from far-off lands, were competing for invitations to the salon, where it was rumored that Mata Hari was actually performing sacred dances in the nude.

The public wanted to know more about her. She told journalists that she was actually Dutch in origin, but had grown up on the island of Java. She would also talk about time spent in India, how she had learned sacred Hindu dances there, and how Indian women "can shoot straight, ride horseback, and are capable of doing logarithms and talk philosophy." By the summer of 1905, although few Parisians had actually seen Mata Hari dance, her name was on everyone's lips.

As Mata Hari gave more interviews, the story of her origins kept changing: She had grown up in India, her grandmother was the daughter of a Javanese princess, she had lived on the island of Sumatra where she had spent her time "horseback riding, gun in hand, and risking her life." No one knew anything certain about her, but journalists did not mind these changes in her biography. They compared her to an Indian goddess, a creature from the pages of Baudelaire—whatever their imagination wanted to see in this mysterious woman from the East.

In August of 1905, Mata Hari performed for the first time in public.

Crowds thronging to see her on opening night caused a riot. She had now become a cult figure, spawning many imitations. One reviewer wrote, "Mata Hari personifies all the poetry of India, its mysticism, its voluptuousness, its hypnotizing charm." Another noted, "If India possesses such unexpected treasures, then all Frenchmen will emigrate to the shores of the Ganges."

Soon the fame of Mata Hari and her sacred Indian dances spread beyond Paris. She was invited to Berlin, Vienna, Milan. Over the next few years she performed throughout Europe, mixed with the highest social circles, and earned an income that gave her an independence rarely enjoyed by a woman of the period. Then, near the end of World War I, she was arrested in France, tried, convicted, and finally executed as a German spy. Only during the trial did the truth come out: Mata Hari was not from Java or India, had not grown up in the Orient, did not have a drop of Eastern blood in her body. Her real name was Margaretha Zelle, and she came from the stolid northern province of Friesland, Holland.

Interpretation

When Margaretha Zelle arrived in Paris, in 1904, she had half a franc in her pocket. She was one of the thousands of beautiful young girls who flocked to Paris every year, taking work as artists' models, nightclub dancers, or vaudeville performers at the Folies Bergère. After a few years they would inevitably be replaced by younger girls, and would often end up on the streets, turning to prostitution, or else returning to the town they came from, older and chastened.

Zelle had higher ambitions. She had no dance experience and had never performed in the theater, but as a young girl she had traveled with her family and had witnessed local dances in Java and Sumatra. Zelle clearly understood that what was important in her act was not the dance itself, or even her face or figure, but her ability to create an air of mystery about herself. The mystery she created lay not just in her dancing, or her costumes, or the stories she would tell, or her endless lies about her origins; it lay in an atmosphere enveloping everything she did. There was nothing you could say for sure about her—she was always changing, always surprising her audience with new costumes, new dances, new stories. This air of mystery left the public always wanting to know more, always wondering about her next move. Mata Hari was no more beautiful than many of the other young girls who came to Paris, and she was not a particularly good dancer. What separated her from the mass, what attracted and held the public's attention and made her famous and wealthy, was her mystery. People are enthralled by mystery; because it invites constant interpretation, they never tire of it. The mysterious cannot be grasped. And what cannot be seized and consumed creates power.

KEYS TO POWER

In the past, the world was filled with the terrifying and unknowable—diseases, disasters, capricious despots, the mystery of death itself. What we could not understand we reimagined as myths and spirits. Over the centuries, though, we have managed, through science and reason, to illuminate the darkness; what was mysterious and forbidding has grown familiar and comfortable. Yet this light has a price: in a world that is ever more banal, that has had its mystery and myth squeezed out of it, we secretly crave enigmas, people or things that cannot be instantly interpreted, seized, and consumed.

That is the power of the mysterious: It invites layers of interpretation, excites our imagination, seduces us into believing that it conceals something marvelous. The world has become so familiar and its inhabitants so predictable that what wraps itself in mystery will almost always draw the limelight to it and make us watch it.

Do not imagine that to create an air of mystery you have to be grand and awe-inspiring. Mystery that is woven into your day-to-day demeanor, and is subtle, has that much more power to fascinate and attract attention. Remember: Most people are upfront, can be read like an open book, take little care to control their words or image, and are hopelessly predictable. By simply holding back, keeping silent, occasionally uttering ambiguous phrases, deliberately appearing inconsistent, and acting odd in the subtlest of ways, you will emanate an aura of mystery. The people around you will then magnify that aura by constantly trying to interpret you.

Both artists and con artists understand the vital link between being mysterious and attracting interest. Count Victor Lustig, the aristocrat of swindlers, played the game to perfection. He was always doing things that were different, or seemed to make no sense. He would show up at the best hotels in a limo driven by a Japanese chauffeur; no one had ever seen a Japanese chauffeur before, so this seemed exotic and strange. Lustig would dress in the most expensive clothing, but always with something—a medal, a flower, an armband—out of place, at least in conventional terms. This was seen not as tasteless but as odd and intriguing. In hotels he would be seen receiving telegrams at all hours, one after the other, brought to him by his Japanese chauffeur—telegrams he would tear up with utter nonchalance. (In fact they were fakes, completely blank.) He would sit alone in the dining room, reading a large and impressive-looking book, smiling at people yet remaining aloof. Within a few days, of course, the entire hotel would be abuzz with interest in this strange man.

All this attention allowed Lustig to lure suckers in with ease. They would beg for his confidence and his company. Everyone wanted to be seen with this mysterious aristocrat. And in the presence of this distracting enigma, they wouldn't even notice that they were being robbed blind.

An air of mystery can make the mediocre appear intelligent and profound. It made Mata Hari, a woman of average appearance and intelligence, seem like a goddess, and her dancing divinely inspired. An air of

mystery about an artist makes his or her artwork immediately more intriguing, a trick Marcel Duchamp played to great effect. It is all very easy to do—say little about your work, tease and titillate with alluring, even contradictory comments, then stand back and let others try to make sense of it all.

Mysterious people put others in a kind of inferior position—that of trying to figure them out. To degrees that they can control, they also elicit the fear surrounding anything uncertain or unknown. All great leaders know that an aura of mystery draws attention to them and creates an intimidating presence. Mao Tse-tung, for example, cleverly cultivated an enigmatic image; he had no worries about seeming inconsistent or contradicting himself—the very contradictoriness of his actions and words meant that he always had the upper hand. No one, not even his own wife, ever felt they understood him, and he therefore seemed larger than life. This also meant that the public paid constant attention to him, ever anxious to witness his next move.

If your social position prevents you from completely wrapping your actions in mystery, you must at least learn to make yourself less obvious. Every now and then, act in a way that does not mesh with other people's perception of you. This way you keep those around you on the defensive, eliciting the kind of attention that makes you powerful. Done right, the creation of enigma can also draw the kind of attention that strikes terror into your enemy.

During the Second Punic War (219–202 B.C.), the great Carthaginian general Hannibal was wreaking havoc in his march on Rome. Hannibal was known for his cleverness and duplicity.

Under his leadership Carthage's army, though smaller than those of the Romans, had constantly outmaneuvered them. On one occasion, though, Hannibal's scouts made a horrible blunder, leading his troops into a marshy terrain with the sea at their back. The Roman army blocked the mountain passes that led inland, and its general, Fabius, was ecstatic—at last he had Hannibal trapped. Posting his best sentries on the passes, he worked on a plan to destroy Hannibal's forces. But in the middle of the night, the sentries looked down to see a mysterious sight: A huge procession of lights was heading up the mountain. Thousands and thousands of lights. If this was Hannibal's army, it had suddenly grown a hundredfold.

The sentries argued heatedly about what this could mean: Reinforcements from the sea? Troops that had been hidden in the area? Ghosts? No explanation made sense.

As they watched, fires broke out all over the mountain, and a horrible noise drifted up to them from below, like the blowing of a million horns. Demons, they thought. The sentries, the bravest and most sensible in the Roman army, fled their posts in a panic.

By the next day, Hannibal had escaped from the marshland. What was his trick? Had he really conjured up demons? Actually what he had done was order bundles of twigs to be fastened to the horns of the thousands of oxen that traveled with his troops as beasts of burden. The twigs were then

lit, giving the impression of the torches of a vast army heading up the mountain. When the flames burned down to the oxen's skin, they stampeded in all directions, bellowing like mad and setting fires all over the mountainside. The key to this device's success was not the torches, the fires, or the noises in themselves, however, but the fact that Hannibal had created a puzzle that captivated the sentries' attention and gradually terrified them. From the mountaintop there was no way to explain this bizarre sight. If the sentries could have explained it they would have stayed at their posts.

If you find yourself trapped, cornered, and on the defensive in some situation, try a simple experiment: Do something that cannot be easily explained or interpreted. Choose a simple action, but carry it out in a way that unsettles your opponent, a way with many possible interpretations, making your intentions obscure. Don't just be unpredictable (although this tactic too can be successful—see Law 17); like Hannibal, create a scene that cannot be read. There will seem to be no method to your madness, no rhyme or reason, no single explanation. If you do this right, you will inspire fear and trembling and the sentries will abandon their posts. Call it the "feigned madness of Hamlet" tactic, for Hamlet uses it to great effect in Shakespeare's play, frightening his stepfather Claudius through the mystery of his behavior. The mysterious makes your forces seem larger, your power more terrifying.

Image: The Dance of the Veils—the veils envelop the dancer. What they reveal causes excitement. What they conceal heightens interest. The essence of mystery.

Authority: If you do not declare yourself immediately, you arouse expectation. . . . Mix a little mystery with everything, and the very mystery stirs up veneration. And when you explain, be not too explicit. . . . In this manner you imitate the Divine way when you cause men to wonder and watch. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

In the beginning of your rise to the top, you must attract attention at all cost, but as you rise higher you must constantly adapt. Never wear the public out with the same tactic. An air of mystery works wonders for those who need to develop an aura of power and get themselves noticed, but it must seem measured and under control. Mata Hari went too far with her fabrications; although the accusation that she was a spy was false, at the time it was a reasonable presumption because all her lies made her seem suspicious and nefarious. Do not let your air of mystery be slowly transformed into a reputation for deceit. The mystery you create must seem a game, playful and unthreatening. Recognize when it goes too far, and pull back.

There are times when the need for attention must be deferred, and when scandal and notoriety are the last things you want to create. The attention you attract must never offend or challenge the reputation of those above you—not, at any rate, if they are secure. You will seem not only paltry but desperate by comparison. There is an art to knowing when to draw notice and when to withdraw.

Lola Montez was one of the great practitioners of the art of attracting attention. She managed to rise from a middle-class Irish background to being the lover of Franz Liszt and then the mistress and political adviser of King Ludwig of Bavaria. In her later years, though, she lost her sense of proportion.

In London in 1850 there was to be a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* featuring the greatest actor of the time, Charles John Kean. Everyone of consequence in English society was to be there; it was rumored that even Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were to make a public appearance. The custom of the period demanded that everyone be seated before the queen arrived. So the audience got there a little early, and when the queen entered her royal box, they observed the convention of standing up and applauding her. The royal couple waited, then bowed. Everyone sat down and the lights were dimmed. Then, suddenly, all eyes turned to a box opposite Queen Victoria's: A woman appeared from the shadows, taking her seat later than the queen. It was Lola Montez. She wore a diamond tiara on her dark hair and a long fur coat over her shoulders. People whispered in amazement as the ermine cloak was dropped to reveal a low-necked gown of crimson velvet. By turning their heads, the audience could see that the royal couple deliberately avoided looking at Lola's box. They followed Victoria's example, and for the rest of the evening Lola Montez was ignored. After that evening no one in fashionable society dared to be seen with her. All her magnetic powers were reversed. People would flee her sight. Her future in England was finished.

Never appear overly greedy for attention, then, for it signals insecurity, and insecurity drives power away. Understand that there are times when it is not in your interest to be the center of attention. When in the presence of a king or queen, for instance, or the equivalent thereof, bow and retreat to the shadows; never compete.

LAW

7

GET OTHERS TO DO THE WORK FOR YOU, BUT ALWAYS TAKE THE CREDIT

JUDGMENT

Use the wisdom, knowledge, and legwork of other people to further your own cause. Not only will such assistance save you valuable time and energy, it will give you a godlike aura of efficiency and speed. In the end your helpers will be forgotten and you will be remembered. Never do yourself what others can do for you.

TRANSGRESSION AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In 1883 a young Serbian scientist named Nikola Tesla was working for the European division of the Continental Edison Company. He was a brilliant inventor, and Charles Batchelor, a plant manager and a personal friend of Thomas Edison, persuaded him he should seek his fortune in America, giving him a letter of introduction to Edison himself. So began a life of woe and tribulation that lasted until Tesla's death.

When Tesla met Edison in New York, the famous inventor hired him on the spot. Tesla worked eighteen-hour days, finding ways to improve the primitive Edison dynamos. Finally he offered to redesign them completely. To Edison this seemed a monumental task that could last years without paying off, but he told Tesla, "There's fifty thousand dollars in it for you—*if* you can do it." Tesla labored day and night on the project and after only a year he produced a greatly improved version of the dynamo, complete with automatic controls. He went to Edison to break the good news and receive his $50,000. Edison was pleased with the improvement, for which he and his company would take credit, but when it came to the issue of the money he told the young Serb, "Tesla, you don't understand our American humor!," and offered a small raise instead.

Tesla's obsession was to create an alternating-current system (AC) of electricity. Edison believed in the direct-current system (DC), and not only refused to support Tesla's research but later did all he could to sabotage him. Tesla turned to the great Pittsburgh magnate George Westinghouse, who had started his own electricity company. Westinghouse completely funded Tesla's research and offered him a generous royalty agreement on future profits. The AC system Tesla developed is still the standard today—but after patents were filed in his name, other scientists came forward to take credit for the invention, claiming that they had laid the groundwork for him. His name was lost in the shuffle, and the public came to associate the invention with Westinghouse himself.

A year later, Westinghouse was caught in a takeover bid from J. Pierpont Morgan, who made him rescind the generous royalty contract he had signed with Tesla. Westinghouse explained to the scientist that his company would not survive if it had to pay him his full royalties; he persuaded Tesla to accept a buyout of his patents for $216,000—a large sum, no doubt, but far less than the $12 million they were worth at the time. The financiers had divested Tesla of the riches, the patents, and essentially the credit for the greatest invention of his career.

The name of Guglielmo Marconi is forever linked with the invention of radio. But few know that in producing his invention—he broadcast a signal across the English Channel in 1899—Marconi made use of a patent Tesla had filed in 1897, and that his work depended on Tesla's research. Once again Tesla received no money and no credit. Tesla invented an induction motor as well as the AC power system, and he is the real "father of radio." Yet none of these discoveries bear his name. As an old man, he lived in poverty.

THE TORTOISE, THE ELEPHANT AND THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

One day the tortoise met the elephant, who trumpeted, "Out of my way, you weakling—I might step on you!" The tortoise was not afraid and stayed where he was, so the elephant stepped on him, but could not crush him. "Do not boast, Mr. Elephant, I am as strong as you are!" said the tortoise, but the elephant just laughed. So the tortoise asked him to come to his hill the next morning.
The next day, before sunrise, the tortoise ran down the hill to the river, where he met the hippopotamus, who was just on his way back into the water after his nocturnal feeding. "Mr Hippo! Shall we have a tug-of-war? I bet I'm as strong as you are!" said the tortoise. The hippopotamus laughed at this ridiculous idea, but agreed. The tortoise produced a long rope and told the hippo to hold it in his mouth until the tortoise shouted "Hey!"
Then the tortoise ran back up the hill where he found the elephant, who was getting impatient. He gave the elephant the other end of the rope and said, "When I say 'Hey!' pull, and you'll see which of us is the strongest." Then he ran halfway back down the

hill, to a place where he couldn't be seen, and shouted, "Hey!" The elephant and the hippopotamus pulled and pulled, but neither could budge the other—they were of equal strength. They both agreed that the tortoise was as strong as they were. Never do what others can do for you. The tortoise let others do the work for him while he got the credit.

ZAIREAN FABLE

In 1917, during his later impoverished years, Tesla was told he was to receive the Edison Medal of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. He turned the medal down. "You propose," he said, "to honor me with a medal which I could pin upon my coat and strut for a vain hour before the members of your Institute. You would decorate my body and continue to let starve, for failure to supply recognition, my mind and its creative products, which have supplied the foundation upon which the major portion of your Institute exists."

Interpretation

Many harbor the illusion that science, dealing with facts as it does, is beyond the petty rivalries that trouble the rest of the world. Nikola Tesla was one of those. He believed science had nothing to do with politics, and claimed not to care for fame and riches. As he grew older, though, this ruined his scientific work. Not associated with any particular discovery, he could attract no investors to his many ideas. While he pondered great inventions for the future, others stole the patents he had already developed and got the glory for themselves.

He wanted to do everything on his own, but merely exhausted and impoverished himself in the process.

To be sure, if the hunter relies on the security of the carriage, utilizes the legs of the six horses, and makes Wang Liang hold their reins, then he will not tire himself and will find it easy to overtake swift animals. Now supposing he discarded the advantage of the carriage, gave up the useful legs of the horses and the skill of Wang Liang, and alighted to run after the animals, then even though his legs were as quick as Lou Chi's, he would not be in time to overtake the animals. In fact, if good horses and strong carriages are taken into use, then mere bondmen and bondwomen will be good enough to catch the animals.

HAN-FEI-TZU, CHINESE PHILOSOPHER, THIRD CENTURY B.C.

Edison was Tesla's polar opposite. He wasn't actually much of a scientific thinker or inventor; he once said that he had no need to be a mathematician because he could always hire one. That was Edison's main method. He was really a businessman and publicist, spotting the trends and the opportunities that were out there, then hiring the best in the field to do the work for him. If he had to he would steal from his competitors. Yet his name is much better known than Tesla's, and is associated with more inventions.

The lesson is twofold: First, the credit for an invention or creation is as important, if not more important, than the invention itself. You must secure the credit for yourself and keep others from stealing it away, or from piggybacking on your hard work. To accomplish this you must always be vigilant and ruthless, keeping your creation quiet until you can be sure there are no vultures circling overhead. Second, learn to take advantage of other people's work to further your own cause. Time is precious and life is short. If you try to do it all on your own, you run yourself ragged, waste energy, and burn yourself out. It is far better to conserve your forces, pounce on the work others have done, and find a way to make it your own.

Everybody steals in commerce and industry.
I've stolen a lot myself.
But I know how *to steal.*
Thomas Edison, 1847–1931

KEYS TO POWER

The world of power has the dynamics of the jungle: There are those who live by hunting and killing, and there are also vast numbers of creatures (hyenas, vultures) who live off the hunting of others. These latter, less imaginative types are often incapable of doing the work that is essential for the creation of power. They understand early on, though, that if they wait long enough, they can always find another animal to do the work for them. Do not be naive: At this very moment, while you are slaving away on some project, there are vultures circling above trying to figure out a way to survive and even thrive off your creativity. It is useless to complain about this, or to wear yourself ragged with bitterness, as Tesla did. Better to protect yourself and join the game. Once you have established a power base, become a vulture yourself, and save yourself a lot of time and energy.

Of the two poles of this game, one can be illustrated by the example of the explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa. Balboa had an obsession—the discovery of El Dorado, a legendary city of vast riches.

Early in the sixteenth century, after countless hardships and brushes with death, he found evidence of a great and wealthy empire to the south of Mexico, in present-day Peru. By conquering this empire, the Incan, and seizing its gold, he would make himself the next Cortés. The problem was that even as he made this discovery, word of it spread among hundreds of other conquistadors. He did not understand that half the game was keeping it quiet, and carefully watching those around him. A few years after he discovered the location of the Incan empire, a soldier in his own army, Francisco Pizarro, helped to get him beheaded for treason. Pizarro went on to take what Balboa had spent so many years trying to find.

The other pole is that of the artist Peter Paul Rubens, who, late in his career, found himself deluged with requests for paintings. He created a system: In his large studio he employed dozens of outstanding painters, one specializing in robes, another in backgrounds, and so on. He created a vast production line in which a large number of canvases would be worked on at the same time. When an important client visited the studio, Rubens would shoo his hired painters out for the day. While the client watched from a balcony, Rubens would work at an incredible pace, with unbelievable energy. The client would leave in awe of this prodigious man, who could paint so many masterpieces in so short a time.

This is the essence of the Law: Learn to get others to do the work for you while you take the credit, and you appear to be of godlike strength and power. If you think it important to do all the work yourself, you will never get far, and you will suffer the fate of the Balboas and Teslas of the world. Find people with the skills and creativity you lack. Either hire them, while putting your own name on top of theirs, or find a way to take their work and make it your own. Their creativity thus becomes yours, and you seem a genius to the world.

There is another application of this law that does not require the parasitic use of your contemporaries' labor: Use the past, a vast storehouse of

THE BLIND HEN

A hen who had lost her sight, and was accustomed to scratching up the earth in search of food, although blind, still continued to scratch away most diligently. Of what use was it to the industrious fool? Another sharp-sighted hen who spared her tender feet never moved from her side, and enjoyed, without scratching, the fruit of the other's labor. For as often as the blind hen scratched up a barley-corn, her watchful companion devoured it.

FABLES,
GOTTHOLD LESSING,
1729–1781

knowledge and wisdom. Isaac Newton called this "standing on the shoulders of giants." He meant that in making his discoveries he had built on the achievements of others. A great part of his aura of genius, he knew, was attributable to his shrewd ability to make the most of the insights of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance scientists. Shakespeare borrowed plots, characterizations, and even dialogue from Plutarch, among other writers, for he knew that nobody surpassed Plutarch in the writing of subtle psychology and witty quotes. How many later writers have in their turn borrowed from—*plagiarized*—Shakespeare?

We all know how few of today's politicians write their own speeches. Their own words would not win them a single vote; their eloquence and wit, whatever there is of it, they owe to a speech writer. Other people do the work, they take the credit. The upside of this is that it is a kind of power that is available to everyone. Learn to use the knowledge of the past and you will look like a genius, even when you are really just a clever borrower.

Writers who have delved into human nature, ancient masters of strategy, historians of human stupidity and folly, kings and queens who have learned the hard way how to handle the burdens of power—their knowledge is gathering dust, waiting for you to come and stand on their shoulders. Their wit can be your wit, their skill can be your skill, and they will never come around to tell people how unoriginal you really are. You can slog through life, making endless mistakes, wasting time and energy trying to do things from your own experience. Or you can use the armies of the past. As Bismarck once said, "Fools say that they learn by experience. I prefer to profit by others' experience."

Image: The Vulture. Of all the creatures in the jungle, he has it the easiest. The hard work of others becomes his work; their failure to survive becomes his nourishment. Keep an eye on the Vulture—while you are hard at work, he is circling above. Do not fight him, join h i m .

Authority: There is much to be known, life is short, and life is not life without knowledge. It is therefore an excellent device to acquire knowledge from everybody. Thus, by the sweat of another's brow, you win the reputation of being an oracle. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

There are times when taking the credit for work that others have done is not the wise course: If your power is not firmly enough established, you will seem to be pushing people out of the limelight. To be a brilliant exploiter of talent your position must be unshakable, or you will be accused of deception.

Be sure you know when letting other people share the credit serves your purpose. It is especially important to not be greedy when you have a master above you. President Richard Nixon's historic visit to the People's Republic of China was originally his idea, but it might never have come off but for the deft diplomacy of Henry Kissinger. Nor would it have been as successful without Kissinger's skills. Still, when the time came to take credit, Kissinger adroitly let Nixon take the lion's share. Knowing that the truth would come out later, he was careful not to jeopardize his standing in the short term by hogging the limelight. Kissinger played the game expertly: He took credit for the work of those below him while graciously giving credit for his own labors to those above. That is the way to play the game.

LAW

8

MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU— USE BAIT IF NECESSARY

JUDGMENT

When you force the other person to act, you are the one in control. It is always better to make your opponent come to you, abandoning his own plans in the process. Lure him with fabulous gains—then attack. You hold the cards.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

At the Congress of Vienna in 1814, the major powers of Europe gathered to carve up the remains of Napoleon's fallen Empire. The city was full of gaiety and the balls were the most splendid in memory. Hovering over the proceedings, however, was the shadow of Napoleon himself. Instead of being executed or exiled far away, he had been sent to the island of Elba, not far from the coast of Italy.

Even imprisoned on an island, a man as bold and creative as Napoleon Bonaparte made everyone nervous. The Austrians plotted to kill him on Elba, but decided it was too risky. Alexander I, Russia's temperamental czar, heightened the anxiety by throwing a fit during the congress when a part of Poland was denied him: "Beware, I shall loose the monster!" he threatened. Everyone knew he meant Napoleon. Of all the statesmen gathered in Vienna, only Talleyrand, Napoleon's former foreign minister, seemed calm and unconcerned. It was as if he knew something the others did not.

Meanwhile, on the island of Elba, Napoleon's life was a mockery of his previous glory. As Elba's "king," he had been allowed to form a court—there was a cook, a wardrobe mistress, an official pianist, and a handful of courtiers. All this was designed to humiliate Napoleon, and it seemed to work.

That winter, however, there occurred a series of events so strange and dramatic they might have been scripted in a play. Elba was surrounded by British ships, their cannons covering all possible exit points. Yet somehow, in broad daylight on 26 February 1815, a ship with nine hundred men on board picked up Napoleon and put to sea. The English gave chase but the ship got away. This almost impossible escape astonished the public throughout Europe, and terrified the statesmen at the Congress of Vienna.

Although it would have been safer to leave Europe, Napoleon not only chose to return to France, he raised the odds by marching on Paris with a tiny army, in hopes of recapturing the throne. His strategy worked—people of all classes threw themselves at his feet. An army under Marshal Ney sped from Paris to arrest him, but when the soldiers saw their beloved former leader, they changed sides. Napoleon was declared emperor again. Volunteers swelled the ranks of his new army. Delirium swept the country. In Paris, crowds went wild. The king who had replaced Napoleon fled the country.

For the next hundred days, Napoleon ruled France. Soon, however, the giddiness subsided. France was bankrupt, its resources nearly exhausted, and there was little Napoleon could do about this. At the Battle of Waterloo, in June of that year, he was finally defeated for good. This time his enemies had learned their lesson: They exiled him to the barren island of Saint Helena, off the west coast of Africa. There he had no more hope of escape.

Interpretation

Only years later did the facts of Napoleon's dramatic escape from Elba come to light. Before he decided to attempt this bold move, visitors to his court had told him that he was more popular in France than ever, and that

the country would embrace him again. One of these visitors was Austria's General Koller, who convinced Napoleon that if he escaped, the European powers, England included, would welcome him back into power. Napoleon was tipped off that the English would let him go, and indeed his escape occurred in the middle of the afternoon, in full view of English spyglasses.

What Napoleon did not know was that there was a man behind it all, pulling the strings, and that this man was his former minister, Talleyrand. And Talleyrand was doing all this not to bring back the glory days but to crush Napoleon once and for all. Considering the emperor's ambition unsettling to Europe's stability, he had turned against him long ago. When Napoleon was exiled to Elba, Talleyrand had protested. Napoleon should be sent farther away, he argued, or Europe would never have peace. But no one listened.

Instead of pushing his opinion, Talleyrand bided his time. Working quietly, he eventually won over Castlereagh and Metternich, the foreign ministers of England and Austria.

Together these men baited Napoleon into escaping. Even Koller's visit, to whisper the promise of glory in the exile's ear, was part of the plan. Like a master cardplayer, Talleyrand figured everything out in advance. He knew Napoleon would fall into the trap he had set. He also foresaw that Napoleon would lead the country into a war, which, given France's weakened condition, could only last a few months. One diplomat in Vienna, who understood that Talleyrand was behind it all, said, "He has set the house ablaze in order to save it from the plague."

When I have laid bait for deer,
I don't shoot at the first doe that comes to sniff,
but wait until the whole herd has gathered round.
Otto von Bismarck, 1815–1898

KEYS TO POWER

How many times has this scenario played itself out in history: An aggressive leader initiates a series of bold moves that begin by bringing him much power. Slowly, however, his power reaches a peak, and soon everything turns against him. His numerous enemies band together; trying to maintain his power, he exhausts himself going in this direction and that, and inevitably he collapses. The reason for this pattern is that the aggressive person is rarely in full control. He cannot see more than a couple of moves ahead, cannot see the consequences of this bold move or that one. Because he is constantly being forced to react to the moves of his ever-growing host of enemies, and to the unforeseen consequences of his own rash actions, his aggressive energy is turned against him.

In the realm of power, you must ask yourself, what is the point of chasing here and there, trying to solve problems and defeat my enemies, if I never feel in control? Why am I always having to react to events instead of directing them? The answer is simple: Your idea of power is wrong. You

have mistaken aggressive action for effective action. And most often the most effective action is to stay back, keep calm, and let others be frustrated by the traps you lay for them, playing for long-term power rather than quick victory.

Remember: The essence of power is the ability to keep the initiative, to get others to react to *your* moves, to keep your opponent and those around you on the defensive. When you make other people come to you, you suddenly become the one controlling the situation. And the one who has control has power. Two things must happen to place you in this position: You yourself must learn to master your emotions, and never to be influenced by anger; meanwhile, however, you must play on people's natural tendency to react angrily when pushed and baited. In the long run, the ability to make others come to you is a weapon far more powerful than any tool of aggression.

Study how Talleyrand, the master of the art, performed this delicate trick. First, he overcame the urge to try to convince his fellow statesmen that they needed to banish Napoleon far away. It is only natural to want to persuade people by pleading your case, imposing your will with words. But this often turns against you. Few of Talleyrand's contemporaries believed Napoleon was still a threat, so that if he had spent a lot of energy trying to convince them, he would only have made himself look foolish. Instead, he held his tongue and his emotions in check. Most important of all, he laid Napoleon a sweet and irresistible trap. He knew the man's weakness, his impetuosity, his need for glory and the love of the masses, and he played all this to perfection. When Napoleon went for the bait, there was no danger that he might succeed and turn the tables on Talleyrand, who better than anyone knew France's depleted state. And even had Napoleon been able to overcome these difficulties, the likelihood of his success would have been greater were he able to choose his time and place of action. By setting the proper trap, Talleyrand took the time and place into his own hands.

All of us have only so much energy, and there is a moment when our energies are at their peak. When you make the other person come to you, he wears himself out, wasting his energy on the trip. In the year 1905, Russia and Japan were at war. The Japanese had only recently begun to modernize their warships, so that the Russians had a stronger navy, but by spreading false information the Japanese marshal Togo Heihachiro baited the Russians into leaving their docks in the Baltic Sea, making them believe they could wipe out the Japanese fleet in one swift attack. The Russian fleet could not reach Japan by the quickest route—through the Strait of Gibraltar and then the Suez Canal into the Indian Ocean—because these were controlled by the British, and Japan was an ally of Great Britain. They had to go around the Cape of Good Hope, at the southern tip of Africa, adding over more than six thousand miles to the voyage. Once the fleet passed the Cape, the Japanese spread another false story: They were sailing to launch a counterattack. So the Russians made the entire journey to Japan on combat alert. By the time they arrived, their seamen were tense, exhausted, and overworked, while the Japanese had been waiting at their ease. Despite the

odds and their lack of experience in modern naval warfare, the Japanese crushed the Russians.

One added benefit of making the opponent come to you, as the Japanese discovered with the Russians, is that it forces him to operate in your territory. Being on hostile ground will make him nervous and often he will rush his actions and make mistakes. For negotiations or meetings, it is always wise to lure others into your territory, or the territory of your choice. You have your bearings, while they see nothing familiar and are subtly placed on the defensive.

Manipulation is a dangerous game. Once someone suspects he is being manipulated, it becomes harder and harder to control him. But when you make your opponent come to you, you create the illusion that he is controlling the situation. He does not feel the strings that pull him, just as Napoleon imagined that he himself was the master of his daring escape and return to power.

Everything depends on the sweetness of your bait. If your trap is attractive enough, the turbulence of your enemies' emotions and desires will blind them to reality. The greedier they become, the more they can be led around.

The great nineteenth-century robber baron Daniel Drew was a master at playing the stock market. When he wanted a particular stock to be bought or sold, driving prices up or down, he rarely resorted to the direct approach. One of his tricks was to hurry through an exclusive club near Wall Street, obviously on his way to the stock exchange, and to pull out his customary red bandanna to wipe his perspiring brow. A slip of paper would fall from this bandanna that he would pretend not to notice. The club's members were always trying to foresee Drew's moves, and they would pounce on the paper, which invariably seemed to contain an inside tip on a stock. Word would spread, and members would buy or sell the stock in droves, playing perfectly into Drew's hands.

If you can get other people to dig their own graves, why sweat yourself? Pickpockets work this to perfection. The key to picking a pocket is knowing which pocket contains the wallet. Experienced pickpockets often ply their trade in train stations and other places where there is a clearly marked sign reading BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS. Passersby seeing the sign invariably feel for their wallet to make sure it is still there. For the watching pickpockets, this is like shooting fish in a barrel. Pickpockets have even been known to place their own BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS signs to ensure their success.

When you are making people come to you, it is sometimes better to let them know you are forcing their hand. You give up deception for overt manipulation. The psychological ramifications are profound: The person who makes others come to him appears powerful, and demands respect.

Filippo Brunelleschi, the great Renaissance artist and architect, was a great practitioner of the art of making others come to him as a sign of his power. On one occasion he had been engaged to repair the dome of the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral in Florence. The commission was impor-

tant and prestigious. But when the city officials hired a second man, Lorenzo Ghiberti, to work with Brunelleschi, the great artist brooded in secret. He knew that Ghiberti had gotten the job through his connections, and that he would do none of the work and get half the credit. At a critical moment of the construction, then, Brunelleschi suddenly developed a mysterious illness. He had to stop work, but pointed out to city officials that they had hired Ghiberti, who should have been able to continue the work on his own. Soon it became clear that Ghiberti was useless and the officials came begging to Brunelleschi. He ignored them, insisting that Ghiberti should finish the project, until finally they realized the problem: They fired Ghiberti.

By some miracle, Brunelleschi recovered within days. He did not have to throw a tantrum or make a fool of himself; he simply practiced the art of "making others come to you."

If on one occasion you make it a point of dignity that others must come to you and you succeed, they will continue to do so even after you stop trying.

Image: The Honeyed Bear Trap. The bear hunter does not chase his prey; a bear that knows it is hunted is nearly impossible to catch and is ferocious if cornered. Instead, the hunter lays traps baited with honey. He does not exhaust himself and risk his life in pursuit. He baits, then waits.

Authority: Good warriors make others come to them, and do not go to others. This is the principle of emptiness and fullness of others and self. When you induce opponents to come to you, then their force is always empty; as long as you do not go to them, your force is always full. Attacking emptiness with fullness is like throwing stones on eggs. (Zhang Yu, eleventh-century commentator on *The Art of War*)

REVERSAL

Although it is generally the wiser policy to make others exhaust themselves chasing you, there are opposite cases where striking suddenly and aggressively at the enemy so demoralizes him that his energies sink. Instead of making others come to you, you go to them, force the issue, take the lead. Fast attack can be an awesome weapon, for it forces the other person to react without the time to think or plan. With no time to think, people make errors of judgment, and are thrown on the defensive. This tactic is the obverse of waiting and baiting, but it serves the same function: You make your enemy respond on your terms.

Men like Cesare Borgia and Napoleon used the element of speed to intimidate and control. A rapid and unforeseen move is terrifying and demoralizing. You must choose your tactics depending on the situation. If you have time on your side, and know that you and your enemies are at least at equal strength, then deplete their strength by making them come to you. If time is against you—your enemies are weaker, and waiting will only give them the chance to recover—give them no such chance. Strike quickly and they have nowhere to go. As the boxer Joe Louis put it, "He can run, but he can't hide."

LAW

9

WIN THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS, NEVER THROUGH ARGUMENT

JUDGMENT

Any momentary triumph you think you have gained through argument is really a Pyrrhic victory: The resentment and ill will you stir up is stronger and lasts longer than any momentary change of opinion. It is much more powerful to get others to agree with you through your actions, without saying a word. Demonstrate, do not explicate.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

In 131 B.C., the Roman consul Publius Crassus Dives Mucianus, laying siege to the Greek town of Pergamus, found himself in need of a battering ram to force through the town's walls. He had seen a couple of hefty ship's masts in a shipyard in Athens a few days before, and he ordered that the larger of these be sent to him immediately. The military engineer in Athens who received the order felt certain that the consul really wanted the smaller of the masts. He argued endlessly with the soldiers who delivered the request: The smaller mast, he told them, was much better suited to the task. And indeed it would be easier to transport.

The soldiers warned the engineer that their master was not a man to argue with, but he insisted that the smaller mast would be the only one that would work with a machine that he was constructing to go with it. He drew diagram after diagram, and went so far as to say that he was the expert and they had no clue what they were talking about. The soldiers knew their leader and at last convinced the engineer that it would be better to swallow his expertise and obey.

After they left, though, the engineer thought about it some more. What was the point, he asked himself, in obeying an order that would lead to failure? And so he sent the smaller mast, confident that the consul would see how much more effective it was and reward him justly.

When the smaller mast arrived, Mucianus asked his soldiers for an explanation. They described to him how the engineer had argued endlessly for the smaller mast, but had finally promised to send the larger one. Mucianus went into a rage. He could not concentrate on the siege, or consider the importance of breaching the walls before the town received reinforcements. All he could think about was the impudent engineer, whom he ordered to be brought to him immediately.

Arriving a few days later, the engineer gladly explained to the consul, one more time, the reasons for the smaller mast. He went on and on, using the same arguments he had made with the soldiers. He said it was wise to listen to experts in these matters, and if the attack was only tried with the battering ram he had sent, the consul would not regret it. Mucianus let him finish, then had him stripped naked before the soldiers and flogged and scourged with rods until he died.

Interpretation

The engineer, whose name has not been recorded by history, had spent his life designing masts and pillars, and was respected as the finest engineer in a city that had excelled in the science. He knew that he was right. A smaller ram would allow more speed and carry more force. Larger is not necessarily better. Of course the consul would see his logic, and would eventually understand that science is neutral and reason superior. How could the consul possibly persist in his ignorance if the engineer showed him detailed diagrams and explained the theories behind his advice?

The military engineer was the quintessence of the Arguer, a type found everywhere among us. The Arguer does not understand that words

THE SULTAN AND THE VIZIER

A vizier had served his master for some thirty years and was known and admired for his loyalty, truthfulness, and devotion to God. His honesty, however, had made him many enemies in the court, who spread stories of his duplicity and perfidy. They worked on the sultan day in and day out until he too came to distrust the innocent vizier and finally ordered the man who had served him so well to be put to death. In this realm, those condemned to death were tied up and thrown into the pen where the sultan kept his fiercest hunting dogs. The dogs would promptly tear the victim to pieces. Before being thrown to the dogs, however, the vizier asked for one last request. "I would like ten days' respite," he said, "so that I can pay my debts, collect any money due to me, return items that people have put in my care, and share out my goods among the members of my family and my children and appoint a guardian for them." After receiving a guarantee that the vizier would not try to escape, the sultan granted this request. The vizier hurried home, collected one hundred gold pieces, then paid a visit to the huntsman who looked after the sultan's

are never neutral, and that by arguing with a superior he impugns the intelligence of one more powerful than he. He also has no awareness of the person he is dealing with. Since each man believes that he is right, and words will rarely convince him otherwise, the arguer's reasoning falls on deaf ears. When cornered, he only argues more, digging his own grave. Once he has made the other person feel insecure and inferior in his beliefs, the eloquence of Socrates could not save the situation.

It is not simply a question of avoiding an argument with those who stand above you. We all believe we are masters in the realm of opinions and reasoning. You must be careful, then: Learn to demonstrate the correctness of your ideas indirectly.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In 1502, in Florence, Italy, an enormous block of marble stood in the works department of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore. It had once been a magnificent piece of raw stone, but an unskillful sculptor had mistakenly bored a hole through it where there should have been a figure's legs, generally mutilating it. Piero Soderini, Florence's mayor, had contemplated trying to save the block by commissioning Leonardo da Vinci to work on it, or some other master, but had given up, since everyone agreed that the stone had been ruined. So, despite the money that had been wasted on it, it gathered dust in the dark halls of the church.

This was where things stood until some Florentine friends of the great Michelangelo decided to write to the artist, then living in Rome. He alone, they said, could do something with the marble, which was still magnificent raw material. Michelangelo traveled to Florence, examined the stone, and came to the conclusion that he could in fact carve a fine figure from it, by adapting the pose to the way the rock had been mutilated. Soderini argued that this was a waste of time—nobody could salvage such a disaster—but he finally agreed to let the artist work on it. Michelangelo decided he would depict a young David, sling in hand.

Weeks later, as Michelangelo was putting the final touches on the statue, Soderini entered the studio. Fancying himself a bit of a connoisseur, he studied the huge work, and told Michelangelo that while he thought it was magnificent, the nose, he judged, was too big. Michelangelo realized that Soderini was standing in a place right under the giant figure and did not have the proper perspective. Without a word, he gestured for Soderini to follow him up the scaffolding. Reaching the nose, he picked up his chisel, as well as a bit of marble dust that lay on the planks. With Soderini just a few feet below him on the scaffolding, Michelangelo started to tap lightly with the chisel, letting the bits of dust he had gathered in his hand to fall little by little. He actually did nothing to change the nose, but gave every appearance of working on it. After a few minutes of this charade he stood aside: "Look at it now." "I like it better," replied Soderini, "you've made it come alive."

dogs. He offered this man the one hundred gold pieces and said, "Let me look after the dogs for ten days." The huntsman agreed, and for the next ten days the vizier cared for the beasts with great attention, grooming them well and feeding them handsomely. By the end of the ten days they were eating out of his hand.

On the eleventh day the vizier was called before the sultan, the charges were repeated, and the sultan watched as the vizier was tied up and thrown to the dogs. Yet when the beasts saw him, they ran up to him with wagging tails. They nibbled affectionately at his shoulders and began playing with him. The sultan and the other witnesses were amazed, and the sultan asked the vizier why the dogs had spared his life. The vizier replied, "I have looked after these dogs for ten days. The sultan has seen the result for himself. I have looked after you *for thirty years, and what is the result? I am condemned to death on the strength of accusations brought by my enemies." The sultan blushed with shame. He not only pardoned the vizier but gave him a fine set of clothes and handed over to him the men who had slandered his reputation. The noble vizier set them free and continued to treat them with kindness.*

THE SUBTLE RUSE: THE BOOK OF ARABIC WISDOM AND GUILE, THIRTEENTH CENTURY

THE WORKS OF AMASIS

When Apries had been deposed in the way I have described, Amasis came to the throne. He belonged to the district of Sais and was a native of the town called Siuph. At first the Egyptians were inclined to be contemptuous, and did not think much of him because of his humble and undistinguished origin; but later on he cleverly brought them to heel, without having recourse to harsh measures. Amongst his innumerable treasures, he had a gold footbath, which he and his guests used on occasion to wash their feet in. This he broke up, and with the material had a statue made to one of the gods, which he then set up in what he thought the most suitable spot in the city. The Egyptians constantly coming upon the statue, treated it with profound reverence, and as soon as Amasis heard of the effect it had upon them, he called a meeting and revealed the fact that the deeply revered statue was once a footbath, which they washed their feet and pissed and vomited in. He went on to say that his own case was much the same, in that once he had been only an ordinary person and was now their king; so that just as they had come to revere the transformed footbath, so they had better pay

Interpretation

Michelangelo knew that by changing the shape of the nose he might ruin the entire sculpture. Yet Soderini was a patron who prided himself on his aesthetic judgment. To offend such a man by arguing would not only gain Michelangelo nothing, it would put future commissions in jeopardy. Michelangelo was too clever to argue. His solution was to change Soderini's perspective (literally bringing him closer to the nose) without making him realize that this was the cause of his misperception.

Fortunately for posterity, Michelangelo found a way to keep the perfection of the statue intact while at the same time making Soderini believe he had improved it. Such is the double power of winning through actions rather than argument: No one is offended, and your point is proven.

KEYS TO POWER

In the realm of power you must learn to judge your moves by their long-term effects on other people. The problem in trying to prove a point or gain a victory through argument is that in the end you can never be certain how it affects the people you're arguing with: They may appear to agree with you politely, but inside they may resent you. Or perhaps something you said inadvertently even offended them—words have that insidious ability to be interpreted according to the other person's mood and insecurities. Even the best argument has no solid foundation, for we have all come to distrust the slippery nature of words. And days after agreeing with someone, we often revert to our old opinion out of sheer habit.

Understand this: Words are a dime a dozen. Everyone knows that in the heat of an argument, we will all say anything to support our cause. We will quote the Bible, refer to unverifiable statistics. Who can be persuaded by bags of air like that? Action and demonstration are much more powerful and meaningful. They are there, before our eyes, for us to see—"Yes, now the statue's nose does look just right." There are no offensive words, no possibility of misinterpretation. No one can argue with a demonstrated proof. As Baltasar Gracián remarks, "The truth is generally seen, rarely heard."

Sir Christopher Wren was England's version of the Renaissance man. He had mastered the sciences of mathematics, astronomy, physics, and physiology. Yet during his extremely long career as England's most celebrated architect he was often told by his patrons to make impractical changes in his designs. Never once did he argue or offend. He had other ways of proving his point.

In 1688 Wren designed a magnificent town hall for the city of Westminster. The mayor, however, was not satisfied; in fact he was nervous. He told Wren he was afraid the second floor was not secure, and that it could all come crashing down on his office on the first floor. He demanded that Wren add two stone columns for extra support. Wren, the consummate engineer, knew that these columns would serve no purpose, and that the

mayor's fears were baseless. But build them he did, and the mayor was grateful. It was only years later that workmen on a high scaffold saw that the columns stopped just short of the ceiling.

They were dummies. But both men got what they wanted: The mayor could relax, and Wren knew posterity would understand that his original design worked and the columns were unnecessary.

The power of demonstrating your idea is that your opponents do not get defensive, and are therefore more open to persuasion. Making them literally and physically feel your meaning is infinitely more powerful than argument.

A heckler once interrupted Nikita Khrushchev in the middle of a speech in which he was denouncing the crimes of Stalin. "You were a colleague of Stalin's," the heckler yelled, "why didn't you stop him then?" Khrushchev apparently could not see the heckler and barked out, "Who said that?" No hand went up. No one moved a muscle. After a few seconds of tense silence, Khrushchev finally said in a quiet voice, "Now you know why I didn't stop him." Instead of just arguing that anyone facing Stalin was afraid, knowing that the slightest sign of rebellion would mean certain death, he had made them *feel* what it was like to face Stalin—had made them feel the paranoia, the fear of speaking up, the terror of confronting the leader, in this case Khrushchev. The demonstration was visceral and no more argument was necessary.

The most powerful persuasion goes beyond action into symbol. The power of a symbol—a flag, a mythic story, a monument to some emotional event—is that everyone understands you without anything being said. In 1975, when Henry Kissinger was engaged in some frustrating negotiations with the Israelis over the return of part of the Sinai desert that they had seized in the 1967 war, he suddenly broke off a tense meeting and decided to do some sight-seeing. He paid a visit to the ruins of the ancient fortress of Masada, known to all Israelis as the place where seven hundred Jewish warriors committed mass suicide in A.D. 73 rather than give in to the Roman troops besieging them. The Israelis instantly understood the message of Kissinger's visit: He was indirectly accusing them of courting mass suicide. Although the visit did not by itself change their minds, it made them think far more seriously than any direct warning would have. Symbols like this one carry great emotional significance.

When aiming for power, or trying to conserve it, always look for the indirect route. And also choose your battles carefully. If it does not matter in the long run whether the other person agrees with you—or if time and their own experience will make them understand what you mean—then it is best not even to bother with a demonstration. Save your energy and walk away.

honor and respect to him, too. In this way the Egyptians were persuaded to accept him as their master.

THE HISTORIES,
HERODOTUS,
FIFTH CENTURY B.C.

GOD AND ABRAHAM

The Most High God had promised that He would not take Abraham's soul unless the man wanted to die and asked Him to do so. When Abraham's life was drawing to a close, and God determined to seize him, He sent an angel in the guise of a decrepit old man who was almost entirely incapacitated. The old man stopped outside Abraham's door and said to him, "Oh Abraham, I would like something to eat." Abraham was amazed to hear him say this. "Die," exclaimed Abraham. "It would be better for you than to go on living in that condition." Abraham always kept food ready at his home for passing guests. So he gave the old man a bowl containing broth and meat with bread crumbs. The old man sat down to eat. He swallowed laboriously, with great effort, and once when he took some food it dropped from his hand, scattering on the ground. "Oh Abraham," he said,

"help me to eat." Abraham took the food in his hand and lifted it to the old man's lips. But it slid down his beard and over his chest. "What is your age, old man?" asked Abraham. The old man mentioned a number of years slightly greater than Abraham's old age. Then Abraham exclaimed: "Oh Lord Our God, take me unto You before I reach this man's age and sink into the same condition as he is in now." No sooner had Abraham spoken those words than God took possession of his soul.

THE SUBTLE RUSE: THE BOOK OF ARABIC WISDOM AND GUILE, THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Image: The Seesaw. Up and down and up and down go the arguers, getting nowhere fast. Get off the seesaw and show them your meaning without kicking or pushing. Leave them at the top and let gravity bring them gently to the ground.

Authority: Never argue. In society nothing must be discussed; give only results. (Benjamin Disraeli, 1804–1881)

REVERSAL

Verbal argument has one vital use in the realm of power: To distract and cover your tracks when you are practicing deception or are caught in a lie. In such cases it is to your advantage to argue with all the conviction you can muster. Draw the other person into an argument to distract them from your deceptive move. When caught in a lie, the more emotional and certain you appear, the less likely it seems that you are lying.

This technique has saved the hide of many a con artist. Once Count Victor Lustig, swindler par excellence, had sold dozens of suckers around the country a phony box with which he claimed to be able to copy money. Discovering their mistake, the suckers generally chose not to go the police, rather than risk the embarrassment of publicity. But one Sheriff Richards,

of Remsen County, Oklahoma, was not the kind of man to accept being conned out of $10,000, and one morning he tracked Lustig down to a hotel in Chicago.

Lustig heard a knock on the door. When he opened it he was looking down the barrel of a gun. "What seems to be the problem?" he calmly asked. "You son of a bitch," yelled the sheriff, "I'm going to kill you. You conned me with that damn box of yours!" Lustig feigned confusion. "You mean it's not working?" he asked. "You know it's not working," replied the sheriff. "But that's impossible," said Lustig. "There's no way it couldn't be working. Did you operate it properly?" "I did exactly what you told me to do," said the sheriff. "No, you must have done something wrong," said Lustig. The argument went in circles. The barrel of the gun was gently lowered.

Lustig next went to phase two in the argument tactic: He poured out a whole bunch of technical gobbledygook about the box's operation, completely beguiling the sheriff, who now appeared less sure of himself and argued less forcefully. "Look," said Lustig, "I'll give you your money back right now. I'll also give you written instructions on how to work the machine and I'll come out to Oklahoma to make sure it's working properly. There's no way you can lose on that." The sheriff reluctantly agreed. To satisfy him totally, Lustig took out a hundred one-hundred-dollar bills and gave them to him, telling him to relax and have a fun weekend in Chicago. Calmer and a little confused, the sheriff finally left. Over the next few days Lustig checked the paper every morning. He finally found what he was looking for: A short article reporting Sheriff Richards's arrest, trial, and conviction for passing counterfeit notes. Lustig had won the argument; the sheriff never bothered him again.

LAW

10

INFECTION: AVOID THE UNHAPPY AND UNLUCKY

JUDGMENT

You can die from someone else's misery—emotional states are as infectious as diseases. You may feel you are helping the drowning man but you are only precipitating your own disaster. The unfortunate sometimes draw misfortune on themselves; they will also draw it on you. Associate with the happy and fortunate instead.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Born in Limerick, Ireland, in 1818, Marie Gilbert came to Paris in the 1840s to make her fortune as a dancer and performer. Taking the name Lola Montez (her mother was of distant Spanish descent), she claimed to be a flamenco dancer from Spain. By 1845 her career was languishing, and to survive she became a courtesan—quickly one of the more successful in Paris.

Only one man could salvage Lola's dancing career: Alexandre Dujarier, owner of the newspaper with the largest circulation in France, and also the newspaper's drama critic. She decided to woo and conquer him. Investigating his habits, she discovered that he went riding every morning. An excellent horsewoman herself, she rode out one morning and "accidentally" ran into him. Soon they were riding together every day. A few weeks later Lola moved into his apartment.

For a while the two were happy together. With Dujarier's help, Lola began to revive her dancing career. Despite the risk to his social standing, Dujarier told friends he would marry her in the spring. (Lola had never told him that she had eloped at age nineteen with an Englishman, and was still legally married.) Although Dujarier was deeply in love, his life started to slide downhill.

His fortunes in business changed and influential friends began to avoid him. One night Dujarier was invited to a party, attended by some of the wealthiest young men in Paris. Lola wanted to go too but he would not allow it. They had their first quarrel, and Dujarier attended the party by himself. There, hopelessly drunk, he insulted an influential drama critic, Jean-Baptiste Rosemond de Beauvallon, perhaps because of something the critic had said about Lola. The following morning Beauvallon challenged him to a duel. Beauvallon was one of the best pistol shots in France. Dujarier tried to apologize, but the duel took place, and he was shot and killed. Thus ended the life of one of the most promising young men of Paris society. Devastated, Lola left Paris.

In 1846 Lola Montez found herself in Munich, where she decided to woo and conquer King Ludwig of Bavaria. The best way to Ludwig, she discovered, was through his aide-de-camp, Count Otto von Rechberg, a man with a fondness for pretty girls. One day when the count was breakfasting at an outdoor café, Lola rode by on her horse, was "accidentally" thrown from the saddle, and landed at Rechberg's feet. The count rushed to help her and was enchanted. He promised to introduce her to Ludwig.

Rechberg arranged an audience with the king for Lola, but when she arrived in the anteroom, she could hear the king saying he was too busy to meet a favor-seeking stranger. Lola pushed aside the sentries and entered his room anyway. In the process, the front of her dress somehow got torn (perhaps by her, perhaps by one of the sentries), and to the astonishment of all, most especially the king, her bare breasts were brazenly exposed. Lola was granted her audience with Ludwig. Fifty-five hours later she made her debut on the Bavarian stage; the reviews were terrible, but that did not stop Ludwig from arranging more performances.

THE NUT AND THE CAMPANILE

A nut found itself carried by a crow to the top of a tall campanile, and by falling into a crevice succeeded in escaping its dread fate. It then besought the wall to shelter it, by appealing to it by the grace of God, and praising its height, and the beauty and noble tone of its bells. "Alas," it went on, "as I have not been able to drop beneath the green branches of my old Father and to lie in the fallow earth covered by his fallen leaves, do you, at least, not abandon me. When I found myself in the beak of the cruel crow I made a vow, that if I escaped I would end my life in a little hole."
At these words, the wall, moved with compassion, was content to shelter the nut in the spot where it had fallen. Within a short time, the nut burst open: Its roots reached in between the crevices of the stones and began to push them apart; its shoots pressed up toward the sky. They soon rose above the building, and as the twisted roots grew thicker they began to thrust the walls apart and force the ancient stones from their old places. Then the wall, too late and in vain, bewailed the cause of its destruction, and in short time it fell in ruin.

LEONARDO DA VINCI, 1452–1519

In his own time Simon Thomas was a great doctor. I remember that I happened to meet him one day at the home of a rich old consumptive: He told his patient when discussing ways to cure him that one means was to provide occasions for me to enjoy his company: He could then fix his eyes on the freshness of my countenance and his thoughts on the overflowing cheerfulness and vigor of my young manhood; by filling all his senses with the flower of my youth his condition might improve. He forgot to add that mine might get worse.

MONTAIGNE, 1533–1592

Ludwig was, in his own words, "bewitched" by Lola. He started to appear in public with her on his arm, and then he bought and furnished an apartment for her on one of Munich's most fashionable boulevards. Although he had been known as a miser, and was not given to flights of fancy, he started to shower Lola with gifts and to write poetry for her. Now his favored mistress, she catapulted to fame and fortune overnight.

Lola began to lose her sense of proportion. One day when she was out riding, an elderly man rode ahead of her, a bit too slowly for her liking. Unable to pass him, she began to slash him with her riding crop. On another occasion she took her dog, unleashed, out for a stroll. The dog attacked a passerby, but instead of helping the man get the dog away, she whipped him with the leash. Incidents like this infuriated the stolid citizens of Bavaria, but Ludwig stood by Lola and even had her naturalized as a Bavarian citizen. The king's entourage tried to wake him to the dangers of the affair, but those who criticized Lola were summarily fired.

While Bavarians who had loved their king now outwardly disrespected him, Lola was made a countess, had a new palace built for herself, and began to dabble in politics, advising Ludwig on policy. She was the most powerful force in the kingdom. Her influence in the king's cabinet continued to grow, and she treated the other ministers with disdain. As a result, riots broke out throughout the realm. A once peaceful land was virtually in the grip of civil war, and students everywhere were chanting, *"Raus mit Lola!"*

By February of 1848, Ludwig was finally unable to withstand the pressure. With great sadness he ordered Lola to leave Bavaria immediately. She left, but not until she was paid off. For the next five weeks the Bavarians' wrath was turned against their formerly beloved king. In March of that year he was forced to abdicate.

Many things are said to be infectious. Sleepiness can be infectious, and yawning as well. In large-scale strategy, when the enemy is agitated and shows an inclination to rush, do not mind in the least. Make a show of complete calmness, and the enemy will be taken by this and will become relaxed. You infect their spirit. You can infect them with a carefree, drunklike spirit, with boredom, or even weakness.

A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS, MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Lola Montez moved to England. More than anything she needed respectability, and despite being married (she still had not arranged a divorce from the Englishman she had wed years before), she set her sights on George Trafford Heald, a promising young army officer who was the son of an influential barrister. Although he was ten years younger than Lola, and could have chosen a wife among the prettiest and wealthiest young girls of English society, Heald fell under her spell. They were married in 1849. Soon arrested on the charge of bigamy, she skipped bail, and she and Heald made their way to Spain. They quarreled horribly and on one occasion Lola slashed him with a knife. Finally, she drove him away. Returning to England, he found he had lost his position in the army. Ostracized from English society, he moved to Portugal, where he lived in poverty. After a few months his short life ended in a boating accident.

A few years later the man who published Lola Montez's autobiography went bankrupt.

In 1853 Lola moved to California, where she met and married a man named Pat Hull. Their relationship was as stormy as all the others, and she left Hull for another man. He took to drink and fell into a deep depression that lasted until he died, four years later, still a relatively young man.

At the age of forty-one, Lola gave away her clothes and finery and turned to God. She toured America, lecturing on religious topics, dressed in white and wearing a halolike white headgear. She died two years later, in 1861.

Interpretation

Lola Montez attracted men with her wiles, but her power over them went beyond the sexual. It was through the force of her character that she kept her lovers enthralled. Men were sucked into the maelstrom she churned up around her. They felt confused, upset, but the strength of the emotions she stirred also made them feel more alive.

As is often the case with infection, the problems would only arise over time. Lola's inherent instability would begin to get under her lovers' skin. They would find themselves drawn into her problems, but their emotional attachment to her would make them want to help her. This was the crucial point of the disease—for Lola Montez could not be helped. Her problems were too deep. Once the lover identified with them, he was lost. He would find himself embroiled in quarrels. The infection would spread to his family and friends, or, in the case of Ludwig, to an entire nation. The only solution would be to cut her off, or suffer an eventual collapse.

The infecting-character type is not restricted to women; it has nothing to do with gender. It stems from an inward instability that radiates outward, drawing disaster upon itself. There is almost a desire to destroy and unsettle. You could spend a lifetime studying the pathology of infecting characters, but don't waste your time—just learn the lesson. When you suspect you are in the presence of an infector, don't argue, don't try to help, don't pass the person on to your friends, or you will become enmeshed. Flee the infector's presence or suffer the consequences.

Regard no foolish man as cultured, though you may reckon a gifted man as wise; and esteem no ignorant abstainer a true ascetic. Do not consort with fools, especially those who consider themselves wise. And be not self-satisfied with your own ignorance. Let your intercourse be only with men of good repute; for it is by such association that men themselves attain to good repute. Do you not observe how sesame-oil is mingled with roses or violets and how, when it has been for some time in association with roses or violets, it ceases to be sesame-oil and is called oil of roses or oil of violets?

A MIRROR FOR PRINCES, KAI KA'US IBN ISKANDAR, ELEVENTH CENTURY

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much. . . .
I do not know the man I should avoid so soon as that spare Cassius. . . .
Such men as he be never at heart's ease whiles they behold a greater than themselves, and therefore are they very dangerous.
Julius Caesar, *William Shakespeare, 1564–1616*

KEYS TO POWER

Those misfortunates among us who have been brought down by circumstances beyond their control deserve all the help and sympathy we can give them. But there are others who are not born to misfortune or unhappiness, but who draw it upon themselves by their destructive actions and unsettling effect on others. It would be a great thing if we could raise them up, change their patterns, but more often than not it is their patterns that end up getting inside and changing us. The reason is simple—humans are extremely susceptible to the moods, emotions, and even the ways of thinking of those with whom they spend their time.

The incurably unhappy and unstable have a particularly strong infect-

ing power because their characters and emotions are so intense. They often present themselves as victims, making it difficult, at first, to see their miseries as self-inflicted. Before you realize the real nature of their problems you have been infected by them.

Understand this: In the game of power, the people you associate with are critical. The risk of associating with infectors is that you will waste valuable time and energy trying to free yourself. Through a kind of guilt by association, you will also suffer in the eyes of others. Never underestimate the dangers of infection.

There are many kinds of infector to be aware of, but one of the most insidious is the sufferer from chronic dissatisfaction. Cassius, the Roman conspirator against Julius Caesar, had the discontent that comes from deep envy. He simply could not endure the presence of anyone of greater talent. Probably because Caesar sensed the man's interminable sourness, he passed him up for the position of first praetorship, and gave the position to Brutus instead. Cassius brooded and brooded, his hatred for Caesar becoming pathological. Brutus himself, a devoted republican, disliked Caesar's dictatorship; had he had the patience to wait, he would have become the first man in Rome after Caesar's death, and could have undone the evil that the leader had wrought. But Cassius infected him with his own rancor, bending his ear daily with tales of Caesar's evil. He finally won Brutus over to the conspiracy. It was the beginning of a great tragedy. How many misfortunes could have been avoided had Brutus learned to fear the power of infection.

There is only one solution to infection: quarantine. But by the time you recognize the problem it is often too late. A Lola Montez overwhelms you with her forceful personality. Cassius intrigues you with his confiding nature and the depth of his feelings. How can you protect yourself against such insidious viruses? The answer lies in judging people on the effects they have on the world and not on the reasons they give for their problems. Infectors can be recognized by the misfortune they draw on themselves, their turbulent past, their long line of broken relationships, their unstable careers, and the very force of their character, which sweeps you up and makes you lose your reason. Be forewarned by these signs of an infector; learn to see the discontent in their eye. Most important of all, do not take pity. Do not enmesh yourself in trying to help. The infector will remain unchanged, but you will be unhinged.

Image: A Virus. Unseen, it enters your pores without warning, spreading silently and slowly. Before you are aware of the infection, it is deep inside you.

The other side of infection is equally valid, and perhaps more readily understood: There are people who attract happiness to themselves by their good cheer, natural buoyancy, and intelligence. They are a source of pleasure, and you must associate with them to share in the prosperity they draw upon themselves.

This applies to more than good cheer and success: All positive qualities can infect us. Talleyrand had many strange and intimidating traits, but most agreed that he surpassed all Frenchmen in graciousness, aristocratic charm, and wit. Indeed he came from one of the oldest noble families in the country, and despite his belief in democracy and the French Republic, he retained his courtly manners. His contemporary Napoleon was in many ways the opposite—a peasant from Corsica, taciturn and ungracious, even violent.

There was no one Napoleon admired more than Talleyrand. He envied his minister's way with people, his wit and his ability to charm women, and as best he could, he kept Talleyrand around him, hoping to soak up the culture he lacked. There is no doubt that Napoleon changed as his rule continued. Many of the rough edges were smoothed by his constant association with Talleyrand.

Use the positive side of this emotional osmosis to advantage. If, for example, you are miserly by nature, you will never go beyond a certain limit; only generous souls attain greatness. Associate with the generous, then, and they will infect you, opening up everything that is tight and restricted in you. If you are gloomy, gravitate to the cheerful. If you are prone to isolation, force yourself to befriend the gregarious. Never associate with those who share your defects—they will reinforce everything that holds you back. Only create associations with positive affinities. Make this a rule of life and you will benefit more than from all the therapy in the world.

> Authority: Recognize the fortunate so that you may choose their company, and the unfortunate so that you may avoid them. Misfortune is usually the crime of folly, and among those who suffer from it there is no malady more contagious: Never open your door to the least of misfortunes, for, if you do, many others will follow in its train. . . . Do not die of another's misery. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

This law admits of no reversal. Its application is universal. There is nothing to be gained by associating with those who infect you with their misery; there is only power and good fortune to be obtained by associating with the fortunate. Ignore this law at your peril.

LAW

11

LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU

JUDGMENT

To maintain your independence you must always be needed and wanted. The more you are relied on, the more freedom you have. Make people depend on you for their happiness and prosperity and you have nothing to fear. Never teach them enough so that they can do without you.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

Sometime in the Middle Ages, a mercenary soldier (a *condottiere*), whose name has not been recorded, saved the town of Siena from a foreign aggressor. How could the good citizens of Siena reward him? No amount of money or honor could possibly compare in value to the preservation of a city's liberty. The citizens thought of making the mercenary the lord of the city, but even that, they decided, wasn't recompense enough. At last one of them stood before the assembly called to debate this matter and said, "Let us kill him and then worship him as our patron saint." And so they did.

The Count of Carmagnola was one of the bravest and most successful of all the *condottieri*. In 1442, late in his life, he was in the employ of the city of Venice, which was in the midst of a long war with Florence. The count was suddenly recalled to Venice. A favorite of the people, he was received there with all kinds of honor and splendor. That evening he was to dine with the doge himself, in the doge's palace. On the way into the palace, however, he noticed that the guard was leading him in a different direction from usual. Crossing the famous Bridge of Sighs, he suddenly realized where they were taking him—to the dungeon. He was convicted on a trumped-up charge and the next day in the Piazza San Marco, before a horrified crowd who could not understand how his fate had changed so drastically, he was beheaded.

Interpretation

Many of the great *condottieri* of Renaissance Italy suffered the same fate as the patron saint of Siena and the Count of Carmagnola: They won battle after battle for their employers only to find themselves banished, imprisoned, or executed. The problem was not ingratitude; it was that there were so many other *condottieri* as able and valiant as they were. They were replaceable. Nothing was lost by killing them. Meanwhile, the older among them had grown powerful themselves, and wanted more and more money for their services. How much better, then, to do away with them and hire a younger, cheaper mercenary. That was the fate of the Count of Carmagnola, who had started to act impudently and independently. He had taken his power for granted without making sure that he was truly indispensable.

Such is the fate (to a less violent degree, one hopes) of those who do not make others dependent on them. Sooner or later someone comes along who can do the job as well as they can—someone younger, fresher, less expensive, less threatening.

Be the *only one* who can do what you do, and make the fate of those who hire you so entwined with yours that they cannot possibly get rid of you. Otherwise you will someday be forced to cross your own Bridge of Sighs.

THE TWO HORSES

Two horses were carrying two loads. The front Horse went well, but the rear Horse was lazy. The men began to pile the rear Horse's load on the front Horse; when they had transferred it all, the rear Horse found it easy going, and he said to the front Horse: "Toil and sweat! The more you try, the more you have to suffer." When they reached the tavern, the owner said: "Why should I fodder two horses when I carry all on one? I had better give the one all the food it wants, and cut the throat of the other; at least I shall have the hide." And so he did.

FABLES,
LEO TOLSTOY,
1828–1910

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

When Otto von Bismarck became a deputy in the Prussian parliament in 1847, he was thirty-two years old and without an ally or friend. Looking

around him, he decided that the side to ally himself with was not the parliament's liberals or conservatives, not any particular minister, and certainly not the people. It was with the king, Frederick William IV. This was an odd choice to say the least, for Frederick was at a low point of his power. A weak, indecisive man, he consistently gave in to the liberals in parliament; in fact he was spineless, and stood for much that Bismarck disliked, personally and politically. Yet Bismarck courted Frederick night and day. When other deputies attacked the king for his many inept moves, only Bismarck stood by him.

Finally, it all paid off: In 1851 Bismarck was made a minister in the king's cabinet. Now he went to work. Time and again he forced the king's hand, getting him to build up the military, to stand up to the liberals, to do exactly as Bismarck wished. He worked on Frederick's insecurity about his manliness, challenging him to be firm and to rule with pride. And he slowly restored the king's powers until the monarchy was once again the most powerful force in Prussia.

When Frederick died, in 1861, his brother William assumed the throne. William disliked Bismarck intensely and had no intention of keeping him around. But he also inherited the same situation his brother had: enemies galore, who wanted to nibble his power away. He actually considered abdicating, feeling he lacked the strength to deal with this dangerous and precarious position. But Bismarck insinuated himself once again. He stood by the new king, gave him strength, and urged him into firm and decisive action. The king grew dependent on Bismarck's strong-arm tactics to keep his enemies at bay, and despite his antipathy toward the man, he soon made him his prime minister. The two quarreled often over policy—Bismarck was much more conservative—but the king understood his own dependency. Whenever the prime minister threatened to resign, the king gave in to him, time after time. It was in fact Bismarck who set state policy.

Years later, Bismarck's actions as Prussia's prime minister led the various German states to be united into one country. Now Bismarck finagled the king into letting himself be crowned emperor of Germany. Yet it was really Bismarck who had reached the heights of power. As right-hand man to the emperor, and as imperial chancellor and knighted prince, he pulled all the levers.

Interpretation

Most young and ambitious politicians looking out on the political landscape of 1840s Germany would have tried to build a power base among those with the most power. Bismarck saw different. Joining forces with the powerful can be foolish: They will swallow you up, just as the doge of Venice swallowed up the Count of Carmagnola. No one will come to depend on you if they are already strong. If you are ambitious, it is much wiser to seek out weak rulers or masters with whom you can create a relationship of dependency. You become their strength, their intelligence, their spine. What power you hold! If they got rid of you the whole edifice would collapse.

THE CAT THAT WALKED BY HIMSELF

Then the Woman laughed and set the Cat a bowl of the warm white milk and said, "O Cat, you are as clever as a man, but remember that your bargain was not made with the Man or the Dog, and I do not know what they will do when they come home." "What is that to me?" said the Cat. "If I have my place in the Cave by the fire and my warm white milk three times a day, I do not care what the Man or the Dog can do." . . . And from that day to this, Best Beloved, three proper Men out of five will always throw things at a Cat whenever they meet him, and all proper Dogs will chase him up a tree. But the Cat keeps his side of the bargain too. He will kill mice, and he will be kind to Babies when he is in the house, just as long as they do not pull his tail too hard. But when he has done that, and between times, and when the moon gets up and the night comes, he is the Cat that walks by himself, and all places are alike to him. Then he goes out to the Wet Wild Woods or up the Wet Wild Trees or on the Wet Wild Roofs, waving his wild tail and walking by his wild lone.

JUST SO STORIES, RUDYARD KIPLING, 1865–1936

Necessity rules the world. People rarely act unless compelled to. If you create no need for yourself, then you will be done away with at first opportunity. If, on the other hand, you understand the Laws of Power and make others depend on you for their welfare, if you can counteract their weakness with your own "iron and blood," in Bismarck's phrase, then you will survive your masters as Bismarck did. You will have all the benefits of power without the thorns that come from being a master.

Thus a wise prince will think of ways to keep his citizens of every sort and under every circumstance dependent on the state and on him; and then they will always be trustworthy.
Niccolò Machiavelli, 1469–1527

KEYS TO POWER

The ultimate power is the power to get people to do as you wish. When you can do this without having to force people or hurt them, when they willingly grant you what you desire, then your power is untouchable. The best way to achieve this position is to create a relationship of dependence. The master requires your services; he is weak, or unable to function without you; you have enmeshed yourself in his work so deeply that doing away with you would bring him great difficulty, or at least would mean valuable time lost in training another to replace you. Once such a relationship is established you have the upper hand, the leverage to make the master do as you wish. It is the classic case of the man behind the throne, the servant of the king who actually controls the king. Bismarck did not have to bully either Frederick or William into doing his bidding. He simply made it clear that unless he got what he wanted he would walk away, leaving the king to twist in the wind. Both kings soon danced to Bismarck's tune.

Do not be one of the many who mistakenly believe that the ultimate form of power is independence. Power involves a relationship between people; you will always need others as allies, pawns, or even as weak masters who serve as your front. The completely independent man would live in a cabin in the woods—he would have the freedom to come and go as he pleased, but he would have no power. The best you can hope for is that others will grow so dependent on you that you enjoy a kind of reverse independence: Their need for you frees you.

Louis XI (1423–1483), the great Spider King of France, had a weakness for astrology. He kept a court astrologer whom he admired, until one day the man predicted that a lady of the court would die within eight days. When the prophecy came true, Louis was terrified, thinking that either the man had murdered the woman to prove his accuracy or that he was so versed in his science that his powers threatened Louis himself. In either case he had to be killed.

One evening Louis summoned the astrologer to his room, high in the castle. Before the man arrived, the king told his servants that when he gave

THE ELM-TREE AND THE VINE

An extravagant young Vine, vainly ambitious of independence, and fond of rambling at large, despised the alliance of a stately elm that grew near, and courted her embraces. Having risen to some small height without any kind of support, she shot forth her flimsy branches to a very uncommon and superfluous length; calling on her neighbour to take notice how little she wanted his assistance. "Poor infatuated shrub," replied the elm, "how inconsistent is thy conduct! Wouldst thou be truly independent, thou shouldst carefully apply those juices to the enlargement of thy stem, which thou lavishest in vain upon unnecessary foliage. I shortly shall behold thee grovelling on the ground; yet countenanced, indeed, by many of the human race, who, intoxicated with vanity, have despised economy; and who, to support for a moment their empty boast of independence, have exhausted the very source of it in frivolous expenses."

FABLES,
ROBERT DODSLEY,
1703–1764

the signal they were to pick the astrologer up, carry him to the window, and hurl him to the ground, hundreds of feet below.

The astrologer soon arrived, but before giving the signal, Louis decided to ask him one last question: "You claim to understand astrology and to know the fate of others, so tell me what your fate will be and how long you have to live."

"I shall die just three days before Your Majesty," the astrologer replied. The king's signal was never given. The man's life was spared. The Spider King not only protected his astrologer for as long as he was alive, he lavished him with gifts and had him tended by the finest court doctors.

The astrologer survived Louis by several years, disproving his power of prophecy but proving his mastery of power.

This is the model: Make others dependent on you. To get rid of you might spell disaster, even death, and your master dares not tempt fate by finding out. There are many ways to obtain such a position. Foremost among them is to possess a talent and creative skill that simply cannot be replaced.

During the Renaissance, the major obstacle to a painter's success was finding the right patron. Michelangelo did this better than anyone else: His patron was Pope Julius II. But he and the pope quarreled over the building of the pope's marble tomb, and Michelangelo left Rome in disgust. To the amazement of those in the pope's circle, not only did the pope not fire him, he sought him out and in his own haughty way begged the artist to stay. Michelangelo, he knew, could find another patron, but he could never find another Michelangelo.

You do not have to have the talent of a Michelangelo; you do have to have a skill that sets you apart from the crowd. You should create a situation in which you can always latch on to another master or patron but your master cannot easily find another servant with your particular talent. And if, in reality, you are not actually indispensable, you must find a way to make it look as if you are. Having the appearance of specialized knowledge and skill gives you leeway in your ability to deceive those above you into thinking they cannot do without you. Real dependence on your master's part, however, leaves him more vulnerable to you than the faked variety, and it is always within your power to make your skill indispensable.

This is what is meant by the intertwining of fates: Like creeping ivy, you have wrapped yourself around the source of power, so that it would cause great trauma to cut you away. And you do not necessarily have to entwine yourself around the master; another person will do, as long as he or she too is indispensable in the chain.

One day Harry Cohn, president of Columbia Pictures, was visited in his office by a gloomy group of his executives. It was 1951, when the witch-hunt against Communists in Hollywood, carried on by the U.S. Congress's House Un-American Activities Committee, was at its height. The executives had bad news: One of their employees, the screenwriter John Howard Lawson, had been singled out as a Communist. They had to get rid of him right away or suffer the wrath of the committee.

Harry Cohn was no bleeding-heart liberal; in fact, he had always been a die-hard Republican.

His favorite politician was Benito Mussolini, whom he had once visited, and whose framed photo hung on his wall. If there was someone he hated Cohn would call him a "Communist bastard." But to the executives' amazement Cohn told them he would not fire Lawson. He did not keep the screenwriter on because he was a good writer—there were many good writers in Hollywood. He kept him because of a chain of dependence: Lawson was Humphrey Bogart's writer and Bogart was Columbia's star. If Cohn messed with Lawson he would ruin an immensely profitable relationship. That was worth more than the terrible publicity brought to him by his defiance of the committee.

Henry Kissinger managed to survive the many bloodlettings that went on in the Nixon White House not because he was the best diplomat Nixon could find—there were other fine negotiators—and not because the two men got along so well: They did not. Nor did they share their beliefs and politics. Kissinger survived because he entrenched himself in so many areas of the political structure that to do away with him would lead to chaos. Michelangelo's power was *intensive,* depending on one skill, his ability as an artist; Kissinger's was *extensive.* He got himself involved in so many aspects and departments of the administration that his involvement became a card in his hand. It also made him many allies. If you can arrange such a position for yourself, getting rid of you becomes dangerous—all sorts of interdependencies will unravel. Still, the intensive form of power provides more freedom than the extensive, because those who have it depend on no particular master, or particular position of power, for their security.

To make others dependent on you, one route to take is the secret-intelligence tactic. By knowing other people's secrets, by holding information that they wouldn't want broadcast, you seal your fate with theirs. You are untouchable. Ministers of secret police have held this position throughout the ages: They can make or break a king, or, as in the case of J. Edgar Hoover, a president. But the role is so full of insecurities and paranoia that the power it provides almost cancels itself out. You cannot rest at ease, and what good is power if it brings you no peace?

One last warning: Do not imagine that your master's dependence on you will make him love you. In fact, he may resent and fear you. But, as Machiavelli said, it is better to be feared than loved. Fear you can control; love, never. Depending on an emotion as subtle and changeable as love or friendship will only make you insecure. Better to have others depend on you out of fear of the consequences of losing you than out of love of your company.

Image: Vines with Many Thorns. Below, the roots grow deep and wide. Above, the vines push through bushes, entwine themselves around trees and poles and window ledges. To get rid of them would cost such toil and blood, it is easier to let them climb.

Authority: Make people depend on you. More is to be gained from such dependence than courtesy. He who has slaked his thirst, immediately turns his back on the well, no longer needing it. When dependence disappears, so does civility and decency, and then respect. The first lesson which experience should teach you is to keep hope alive but never satisfied, keeping even a royal patron ever in need of you. (Baltasar Gracián, 1601–1658)

REVERSAL

The weakness of making others depend on you is that you are in some measure dependent on them. But trying to move beyond that point means getting rid of those above you—it means standing alone, depending on no one. Such is the monopolistic drive of a J. P. Morgan or a John D. Rockefeller—to drive out all competition, to be in complete control. If you can corner the market, so much the better.

No such independence comes without a price. You are forced to isolate yourself. Monopolies often turn inward and destroy themselves from the internal pressure. They also stir up powerful resentment, making their enemies bond together to fight them. The drive for complete control is often ruinous and fruitless. Interdependence remains the law, independence a rare and often fatal exception. Better to place yourself in a position of mutual dependence, then, and to follow this critical law rather than look for its reversal. You will not have the unbearable pressure of being on top, and the master above you will in essence be your slave, for *he* will depend on *you*.

LAW

12

USE SELECTIVE HONESTY AND GENEROSITY TO DISARM YOUR VICTIM

JUDGMENT

One sincere and honest move will cover over dozens of dishonest ones. Open-hearted gestures of honesty and generosity bring down the guard of even the most suspicious people. Once your selective honesty opens a hole in their armor, you can deceive and manipulate them at will. A timely gift—a Trojan horse—will serve the same purpose.

FRANCESCO BORRI, COURTIER CHARLATAN

Francesco Giuseppe Borri of Milan, whose death in 1695 fell just within the seventeenth century . . . was a forerunner of that special type of charlatanical adventurer, the courtier or "cavalier" impostor. . . . His real period of glory began after he moved to Amsterdam. There he assumed the title of Medico Universale, *maintained a great retinue, and drove about in a coach with six horses. . . . Patients streamed to him, and some invalids had themselves carried in sedan chairs all the way from Paris to his place in Amsterdam. Borri took no payment for his consultations: He distributed great sums among the poor and was never known to receive any money through the post or bills of exchange. As he continued to live with such splendor, nevertheless, it was presumed that he possessed the philosophers' stone. Suddenly this benefactor disappeared from Amsterdam. Then it was discovered that he had taken with him money and diamonds that had been placed in his charge.*

THE POWER OF THE CHARLATAN, GRETE DE FRANCESCO, 1939

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Sometime in 1926, a tall, dapperly dressed man paid a visit to Al Capone, the most feared gangster of his time. Speaking with an elegant Continental accent, the man introduced himself as Count Victor Lustig. He promised that if Capone gave him $50,000 he could double it. Capone had more than enough funds to cover the "investment," but he wasn't in the habit of entrusting large sums to total strangers. He looked the count over: Something about the man was different—his classy style, his manner—and so Capone decided to play along. He counted out the bills personally and handed them to Lustig. "Okay, Count," said Capone. "Double it in sixty days like you said." Lustig left with the money, put it in a safe-deposit box in Chicago, then headed to New York, where he had several other money-making schemes in progress.

The $50,000 remained in the bank box untouched. Lustig made no effort to double it. Two months later he returned to Chicago, took the money from the box, and paid Capone another visit. He looked at the gangster's stony-faced bodyguards, smiled apologetically, and said, "Please accept my profound regrets, Mr. Capone. I'm sorry to report that the plan failed . . . I failed."

Capone slowly stood up. He glowered at Lustig, debating which part of the river to throw him in. But the count reached into his coat pocket, withdrew the $50,000, and placed it on the desk. "Here, sir, is your money, to the penny. Again, my sincere apologies. This is most embarrassing. Things didn't work out the way I thought they would. I would have loved to have doubled your money for you and for myself—Lord knows I need it—but the plan just didn't materialize."

Capone sagged back into his chair, confused. "I know you're a con man, Count," said Capone. "I knew it the moment you walked in here. I expected either one hundred thousand dollars or nothing. But this . . . getting my money back . . . well." "Again my apologies, Mr. Capone," said Lustig, as he picked up his hat and began to leave. "My God! You're honest!" yelled Capone. "If you're on the spot, here's five to help you along." He counted out five one-thousand-dollar bills out of the $50,000. The count seemed stunned, bowed deeply, mumbled his thanks, and left, taking the money.

The $5,000 was what Lustig had been after all along.

Interpretation

Count Victor Lustig, a man who spoke several languages and prided himself on his refinement and culture, was one of the great con artists of modern times. He was known for his audacity, his fearlessness, and, most important, his knowledge of human psychology. He could size up a man in minutes, discovering his weaknesses, and he had radar for suckers. Lustig knew that most men build up defenses against crooks and other troublemakers. The con artist's job is to bring those defenses down.

One sure way to do this is through an act of apparent sincerity and honesty. Who will distrust a person literally caught in the act of being hon-

est? Lustig used selective honesty many times, but with Capone he went a step further. No normal con man would have dared such a con; he would have chosen his suckers for their meekness, for that look about them that says they will take their medicine without complaint. Con Capone and you would spend the rest of your life (whatever remained of it) afraid. But Lustig understood that a man like Capone spends his life mistrusting others. No one around him is honest or generous, and being so much in the company of wolves is exhausting, even depressing. A man like Capone yearns to be the recipient of an honest or generous gesture, to feel that not everyone has an angle or is out to rob him.

Lustig's act of selective honesty disarmed Capone because it was so unexpected. A con artist loves conflicting emotions like these, since the person caught up in them is so easily distracted and deceived.

Do not shy away from practicing this law on the Capones of the world. With a well-timed gesture of honesty or generosity, you will have the most brutal and cynical beast in the kingdom eating out of your hand.

Everything turns gray when I don't have at least one mark on the horizon.
Life then seems empty and depressing. I cannot understand honest men.
They lead desperate lives, full of boredom.
Count Victor Lustig, 1890–1947

KEYS TO POWER

The essence of deception is distraction. Distracting the people you want to deceive gives you the time and space to do something they won't notice. An act of kindness, generosity, or honesty is often the most powerful form of distraction because it disarms other people's suspicions. It turns them into children, eagerly lapping up any kind of affectionate gesture.

In ancient China this was called "giving before you take"—the giving makes it hard for the other person to notice the taking. It is a device with infinite practical uses. Brazenly taking something from someone is dangerous, even for the powerful. The victim will plot revenge. It is also dangerous simply to ask for what you need, no matter how politely: Unless the other person sees some gain for themselves, they may come to resent your neediness. Learn to give before you take. It softens the ground, takes the bite out of a future request, or simply creates a distraction. And the giving can take many forms: an actual gift, a generous act, a kind favor, an "honest" admission—whatever it takes.

Selective honesty is best employed on your first encounter with someone. We are all creatures of habit, and our first impressions last a long time. If someone believes you are honest at the start of your relationship it takes a lot to convince them otherwise. This gives you room to maneuver.

Jay Gould, like Al Capone, was a man who distrusted everyone. By the time he was thirty-three he was already a multimillionaire, mostly through deception and strong-arming. In the late 1860s, Gould invested heavily in the Erie Railroad, then discovered that the market had

been flooded with a vast amount of phony stock certificates for the company. He stood to lose a fortune and to suffer a lot of embarrassment.

In the midst of this crisis, a man named Lord John Gordon-Gordon offered to help. Gordon-Gordon, a Scottish lord, had apparently made a small fortune investing in railroads.

By hiring some handwriting experts Gordon-Gordon was able to prove to Gould that the culprits for the phony stock certificates were actually several top executives with the Erie Railroad itself. Gould was grateful. Gordon-Gordon then proposed that he and Gould join forces to buy up a controlling interest in Erie. Gould agreed. For a while the venture appeared to prosper. The two men were now good friends, and every time Gordon-Gordon came to Gould asking for money to buy more stock, Gould gave it to him. In 1873, however, Gordon-Gordon suddenly dumped all of his stock, making a fortune but drastically lowering the value of Gould's own holdings. Then he disappeared from sight.

Upon investigation, Gould found out that Gordon-Gordon's real name was John Crowningsfield, and that he was the bastard son of a merchant seaman and a London barmaid. There had been many clues before then that Gordon-Gordon was a con man, but his initial act of honesty and support had so blinded Gould that it took the loss of millions for him to see through the scheme.

A single act of honesty is often not enough. What is required is a reputation for honesty, built on a series of acts—but these can be quite inconsequential. Once this reputation is established, as with first impressions, it is hard to shake.

In ancient China, Duke Wu of Chêng decided it was time to take over the increasingly powerful kingdom of Hu. Telling no one of his plan, he married his daughter to Hu's ruler. He then called a council and asked his ministers, "I am considering a military campaign. Which country should we invade?" As he had expected, one of his ministers replied, "Hu should be invaded." The duke seemed angry, and said, "Hu is a sister state now. Why do you suggest invading her?" He had the minister executed for his impolitic remark. The ruler of Hu heard about this, and considering other tokens of Wu's honesty and the marriage with his daughter, he took no precautions to defend himself from Chêng. A few weeks later, Chêng forces swept through Hu and took the country, never to relinquish it.

Honesty is one of the best ways to disarm the wary, but it is not the only one. Any kind of noble, apparently selfless act will serve. Perhaps the best such act, though, is one of generosity. Few people can resist a gift, even from the most hardened enemy, which is why it is often the perfect way to disarm people. A gift brings out the child in us, instantly lowering our defenses. Although we often view other people's actions in the most cynical light, we rarely see the Machiavellian element of a gift, which quite often hides ulterior motives. A gift is the perfect object in which to hide a deceptive move.

Over three thousand years ago the ancient Greeks traveled across the sea to recapture the beautiful Helen, stolen away from them by Paris, and

to destroy Paris's city, Troy. The siege lasted ten years, many heroes died, yet neither side had come close to victory. One day, the prophet Calchas assembled the Greeks.

"Stop battering away at these walls!" he told them. "You must find some other way, some ruse. We cannot take Troy by force alone. We must find some cunning stratagem." The cunning Greek leader Odysseus then came up with the idea of building a giant wooden horse, hiding soldiers inside it, then offering it to the Trojans as a gift. Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, was disgusted with this idea; it was unmanly. Better for thousands to die on the battlefield than to gain victory so deceitfully. But the soldiers, faced with a choice between another ten years of manliness, honor, and death, on the one hand and a quick victory on the other, chose the horse, which was promptly built. The trick was successful and Troy fell. One gift did more for the Greek cause than ten years of fighting.

Image: The Trojan Horse. Your guile is hidden inside a magnificent gift that proves irresistible to your opponent. The walls open. Once inside, wreak havoc.

Selective kindness should also be part of your arsenal of deception. For years the ancient Romans had besieged the city of the Faliscans, always unsuccessfully. One day, however, when the Roman general Camillus was encamped outside the city, he suddenly saw a man leading some children toward him. The man was a Faliscan teacher, and the children, it turned out, were the sons and daughters of the noblest and wealthiest citizens of the town. On the pretense of taking these children out for a walk, he had led them straight to the Romans, offering them as hostages in hopes of ingratiating himself with Camillus, the city's enemy.

Camillus did not take the children hostage. He stripped the teacher, tied his hands behind his back, gave each child a rod, and let them whip him all the way back to the city. The gesture had an immediate effect on the Faliscans. Had Camillus used the children as hostages, some in the city would have voted to surrender. And even if the Faliscans had gone on fighting, their resistance would have been halfhearted. Camillus's refusal to take advantage of the situation broke down the Faliscans' resistance, and they surrendered. The general had calculated correctly. And in any case he had had nothing to lose: He knew that the hostage ploy would not have ended the war, at least not right away. By turning the situation around, he earned his enemy's trust and respect, disarming them. Selective kindness will often break down even the most stubborn foe: Aiming right for the heart, it corrodes the will to fight back.

Remember: By playing on people's emotions, calculated acts of kindness can turn a Capone into a gullible child. As with any emotional approach, the tactic must be practiced with caution: If people see through it, their disappointed feelings of gratitude and warmth will become the most violent hatred and distrust. Unless you can make the gesture seem sincere and heartfelt, do not play with fire.

> Authority: When Duke Hsien of Chin was about to raid Yü, he presented to them a jade and a team of horses. When Earl Chih was about to raid Ch'ou-yu, he presented to them grand chariots. Hence the saying: "When you are about to take, you should give." (Han-fei-tzu, Chinese philosopher, third century B.C.)

REVERSAL

When you have a history of deceit behind you, no amount of honesty, generosity, or kindness will fool people. In fact it will only call attention to itself. Once people have come to see you as deceitful, to act honest all of a sudden is simply suspicious. In these cases it is better to play the rogue.

Count Lustig, pulling the biggest con of his career, was about to sell the Eiffel Tower to an unsuspecting industrialist who believed the government was auctioning it off for scrap metal. The industrialist was prepared to hand over a huge sum of money to Lustig, who had successfully impersonated a government official. At the last minute, however, the mark was suspicious. Something about Lustig bothered him. At the meeting in which he was to hand over the money, Lustig sensed his sudden distrust.

Leaning over to the industrialist, Lustig explained, in a low whisper, how low his salary was, how difficult his finances were, on and on. After a few minutes of this, the industrialist realized that Lustig was asking for a bribe. For the first time he relaxed. Now he knew he could trust Lustig: Since all government officials were dishonest, Lustig had to be real. The man forked over the money. By acting dishonest, Lustig seemed the real McCoy. In this case selective honesty would have had the opposite effect.

As the French diplomat Talleyrand grew older, his reputation as a master liar and deceiver spread. At the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), he would spin fabulous stories and make impossible remarks to people who knew he had to be lying. His dishonesty had no purpose except to cloak the moments when he really was deceiving them. One day, for example, among friends, Talleyrand said with apparent sincerity, "In business one ought to show one's hand." No one who heard him could believe their ears: A man who never once in his life had shown his cards was telling other people to show theirs. Tactics like this made it impossible to distinguish Talleyrand's real deceptions from his fake ones. By embracing his reputation for dishonesty, he preserved his ability to deceive.

Nothing in the realm of power is set in stone. Overt deceptiveness will sometimes cover your tracks, even making you admired for the honesty of your dishonesty.

LAW

13

WHEN ASKING FOR HELP, APPEAL TO PEOPLE'S SELF-INTEREST, NEVER TO THEIR MERCY OR GRATITUDE

JUDGMENT

If you need to turn to an ally for help, do not bother to remind him of your past assistance and good deeds. He will find a way to ignore you. Instead, uncover something in your request, or in your alliance with him, that will benefit him, and emphasize it out of all proportion. He will respond enthusiastically when he sees something to be gained for himself.

THE PEASANT AND THE APPLE-TREE

A peasant had in his garden an apple-tree, which bore no fruit, but only served as a perch for the sparrows and grasshoppers. He resolved to cut it down, and, taking his ax in hand, made a bold stroke at its roots. The grasshoppers and sparrows entreated him not to cut down the tree that sheltered them, but to spare it, and they would sing to him and lighten his labors. He paid no attention to their request, but gave the tree a second and a third blow with his ax. When he reached the hollow of the tree, he found a hive full of honey. Having tasted the honeycomb, he threw down his ax, and, looking on the tree as sacred, took great care of it.

Self-interest alone moves some men.

FABLES, AESOP, SIXTH CENTURY B.C.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

In the early fourteenth century, a young man named Castruccio Castracani rose from the rank of common soldier to become lord of the great city of Lucca, Italy. One of the most powerful families in the city, the Poggios, had been instrumental in his climb (which succeeded through treachery and bloodshed), but after he came to power, they came to feel he had forgotten them. His ambition outweighed any gratitude he felt. In 1325, while Castruccio was away fighting Lucca's main rival, Florence, the Poggios conspired with other noble families in the city to rid themselves of this troublesome and ambitious prince.

Mounting an insurrection, the plotters attacked and murdered the governor whom Castruccio had left behind to rule the city. Riots broke out, and the Castruccio supporters and the Poggio supporters were poised to do battle. At the height of the tension, however, Stefano di Poggio, the oldest member of the family, intervened, and made both sides lay down their arms.

A peaceful man, Stefano had not taken part in the conspiracy. He had told his family it would end in a useless bloodbath. Now he insisted he should intercede on the family's behalf and persuade Castruccio to listen to their complaints and satisfy their demands. Stefano was the oldest and wisest member of the clan, and his family agreed to put their trust in his diplomacy rather than in their weapons.

When news of the rebellion reached Castruccio, he hurried back to Lucca. By the time he arrived, however, the fighting had ceased, through Stefano's agency, and he was surprised by the city's calm and peace. Stefano di Poggio had imagined that Castruccio would be grateful to him for his part in quelling the rebellion, so he paid the prince a visit. He explained how he had brought peace, then begged for Castruccio's mercy. He said that the rebels in his family were young and impetuous, hungry for power yet inexperienced; he recalled his family's past generosity to Castruccio. For all these reasons, he said, the great prince should pardon the Poggios and listen to their complaints. This, he said, was the only just thing to do, since the family had willingly laid down their arms and had always supported him.

Castruccio listened patiently. He seemed not the slightest bit angry or resentful. Instead, he told Stefano to rest assured that justice would prevail, and he asked him to bring his entire family to the palace to talk over their grievances and come to an agreement. As they took leave of one another, Castruccio said he thanked God for the chance he had been given to show his clemency and kindness. That evening the entire Poggio family came to the palace. Castruccio immediately had them imprisoned and a few days later all were executed, including Stefano.

Interpretation

Stefano di Poggio is the embodiment of all those who believe that the justice and nobility of their cause will prevail. Certainly appeals to justice and gratitude have occasionally succeeded in the past, but more often than not

they have had dire consequences, especially in dealings with the Castruccios of the world. Stefano knew that the prince had risen to power through treachery and ruthlessness. This was a man, after all, who had put a close and devoted friend to death. When Castruccio was told that it had been a terrible wrong to kill such an old friend, he replied that he had executed not an old friend but a new enemy.

A man like Castruccio knows only force and self-interest. When the rebellion began, to end it and place oneself at his mercy was the most dangerous possible move. Even once Stefano di Poggio had made that fatal mistake, however, he still had options: He could have offered money to Castruccio, could have made promises for the future, could have pointed out what the Poggios could still contribute to Castruccio's power—their influence with the most influential families of Rome, for example, and the great marriage they could have brokered.

Instead Stefano brought up the past, and debts that carried no obligation. Not only is a man not obliged to be grateful, gratitude is often a terrible burden that he gladly discards. And in this case Castruccio rid himself of his obligations to the Poggios by eliminating the Poggios.

Most men are so thoroughly subjective that nothing really interests them but themselves. They always think of their own case as soon as ever any remark is made, and their whole attention is engrossed and absorbed by the merest chance reference to anything which affects them personally, be it never so remote.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, 1788–1860

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

In 433 B.C., just before the Peloponnesian War, the island of Corcyra (later called Corfu) and the Greek city-state of Corinth stood on the brink of conflict. Both parties sent ambassadors to Athens to try to win over the Athenians to their side. The stakes were high, since whoever had Athens on his side was sure to win. And whoever won the war would certainly give the defeated side no mercy.

Corcyra spoke first. Its ambassador began by admitting that the island had never helped Athens before, and in fact had allied itself with Athens's enemies. There were no ties of friendship or gratitude between Corcyra and Athens. Yes, the ambassador admitted, he had come to Athens now out of fear and concern for Corcyra's safety. The only thing he could offer was an alliance of mutual interests. Corcyra had a navy only surpassed in size and strength by Athens's own; an alliance between the two states would create a formidable force, one that could intimidate the rival state of Sparta. That, unfortunately, was all Corcyra had to offer.

The representative from Corinth then gave a brilliant, passionate speech, in sharp contrast to the dry, colorless approach of the Corcyran. He talked of everything Corinth had done for Athens in the past. He asked how it would look to Athens's other allies if the city put an agreement with a former enemy over one with a present friend, one that had served Athens's interest loyally: Perhaps those allies would break their agreements with Athens if they saw that their loyalty was not valued. He referred to Hellenic law, and the need to repay Corinth for all its good deeds. He finally went on to list the many services Corinth had performed for Athens, and the importance of showing gratitude to one's friends.

After the speech, the Athenians debated the issue in an assembly. On

the second round, they voted overwhelmingly to ally with Corcyra and drop Corinth.

Interpretation

History has remembered the Athenians nobly, but they were the preeminent realists of classical Greece. With them, all the rhetoric, all the emotional appeals in the world, could not match a good pragmatic argument, especially one that added to their power.

What the Corinthian ambassador did not realize was that his references to Corinth's past generosity to Athens only irritated the Athenians, subtly asking them to feel guilty and putting them under obligation. The Athenians couldn't care less about past favors and friendly feelings. At the same time, they knew that if their other allies thought them ungrateful for abandoning Corinth, these city-states would still be unlikely to break their ties to Athens, the preeminent power in Greece. Athens ruled its empire by force, and would simply compel any rebellious ally to return to the fold.

When people choose between talk about the past and talk about the future, a pragmatic person will always opt for the future and forget the past. As the Corcyrans realized, it is always best to speak pragmatically to a pragmatic person. And in the end, most people *are* in fact pragmatic—they will rarely act against their own self-interest.

> *It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong; and besides, we consider that we are worthy of our power. Up till the present moment you, too, used to think that we were; but now, after calculating your own interest, you are beginning to talk in terms of right and wrong. Considerations of this kind have never yet turned people aside from the opportunities of aggrandizement offered by superior strength.*
>
> *Athenian representative to Sparta,*
> *quoted in* The Peloponnesian War, *Thucydides, c. 465–395 B.C.*

KEYS TO POWER

In your quest for power, you will constantly find yourself in the position of asking for help from those more powerful than you. There is an art to asking for help, an art that depends on your ability to understand the person you are dealing with, and to not confuse your needs with theirs.

Most people never succeed at this, because they are completely trapped in their own wants and desires. They start from the assumption that the people they are appealing to have a selfless interest in helping them. They talk as if their needs mattered to these people—who probably couldn't care less. Sometimes they refer to larger issues: a great cause, or grand emotions such as love and gratitude. They go for the big picture when simple, everyday realities would have much more appeal. What they do not realize is that even the most powerful person is locked inside needs of his own, and that if you make no appeal to his self-interest, he merely sees you as desperate or, at best, a waste of time.

In the sixteenth century, Portuguese missionaries tried for years to convert the people of Japan to Catholicism, while at the same time Portugal had a monopoly on trade between Japan and Europe. Although the missionaries did have some success, they never got far among the ruling elite; by the beginning of the seventeenth century, in fact, their proselytizing had completely antagonized the Japanese emperor Ieyasu. When the Dutch began to arrive in Japan in great numbers, Ieyasu was much relieved. He needed Europeans for their know-how in guns and navigation, and here at last were Europeans who cared nothing for spreading religion—the Dutch wanted only to trade. Ieyasu swiftly moved to evict the Portuguese. From then on, he would only deal with the practical-minded Dutch.

Japan and Holland were vastly different cultures, but each shared a timeless and universal concern: self-interest. Every person you deal with is like another culture, an alien land with a past that has nothing to do with yours. Yet you can bypass the differences between you and him by appealing to his self-interest. Do not be subtle: You have valuable knowledge to share, you will fill his coffers with gold, you will make him live longer and happier. This is a language that all of us speak and understand.

A key step in the process is to understand the other person's psychology. Is he vain? Is he concerned about his reputation or his social standing? Does he have enemies you could help him vanquish? Is he simply motivated by money and power?

When the Mongols invaded China in the twelfth century, they threatened to obliterate a culture that had thrived for over two thousand years. Their leader, Genghis Khan, saw nothing in China but a country that lacked pasturing for his horses, and he decided to destroy the place, leveling all its cities, for "it would be better to exterminate the Chinese and let the grass grow." It was not a soldier, a general, or a king who saved the Chinese from devastation, but a man named Yelu Ch'u-Ts'ai. A foreigner himself, Ch'u-Ts'ai had come to appreciate the superiority of Chinese culture. He managed to make himself a trusted adviser to Genghis Khan, and persuaded him that he would reap riches out of the place if, instead of destroying it, he simply taxed everyone who lived there. Khan saw the wisdom in this and did as Ch'u-Ts'ai advised.

When Khan took the city of Kaifeng, after a long siege, and decided to massacre its inhabitants (as he had in other cities that had resisted him), Ch'u-Ts'ai told him that the finest craftsmen and engineers in China had fled to Kaifeng, and it would be better to put them to use. Kaifeng was spared. Never before had Genghis Khan shown such mercy, but then it really wasn't mercy that saved Kaifeng. Ch'u-Ts'ai knew Khan well. He was a barbaric peasant who cared nothing for culture, or indeed for anything other than warfare and practical results. Ch'u-Ts'ai chose to appeal to the only emotion that would work on such a man: greed.

Self-interest is the lever that will move people. Once you make them see how you can in some way meet their needs or advance their cause, their resistance to your requests for help will magically fall away. At each step on the way to acquiring power, you must train yourself to think your

way inside the other person's mind, to see their needs and interests, to get rid of the screen of your own feelings that obscure the truth. Master this art and there will be no limits to what you can accomplish.

Image: A Cord that Binds. The cord of mercy and gratitude is threadbare, and will break at the first shock. Do not throw such a lifeline. The cord of mutual self-interest is woven of many fibers and cannot easily be severed. It will serve you well for years.

Authority: The shortest and best way to make your fortune is to let people see clearly that it is in their interests to promote yours. (Jean de La Bruyère, 1645–1696)

REVERSAL

Some people will see an appeal to their self-interest as ugly and ignoble. They actually prefer to be able to exercise charity, mercy, and justice, which are their ways of feeling superior to you: When you beg them for help, you emphasize their power and position. They are strong enough to need nothing from you except the chance to feel superior. This is the wine that intoxicates them. They are dying to fund your project, to introduce you to powerful people—provided, of course, that all this is done in public, and for a good cause (usually the more public, the better). Not everyone, then, can be approached through cynical self-interest. Some people will be put off by it, because they don't want to seem to be motivated by such things. They need opportunities to display their good heart.

Do not be shy. Give them that opportunity. It's not as if you are conning them by asking for help—it is really their pleasure to give, and to be seen giving. You must distinguish the differences among powerful people and figure out what makes them tick. When they ooze greed, do not appeal to their charity. When they want to look charitable and noble, do not appeal to their greed.

LAW

14

POSE AS A FRIEND, WORK AS A SPY

JUDGMENT

Knowing about your rival is critical. Use spies to gather valuable information that will keep you a step ahead. Better still: Play the spy yourself. In polite social encounters, learn to probe. Ask indirect questions to get people to reveal their weaknesses and intentions. There is no occasion that is not an opportunity for artful spying.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Joseph Duveen was undoubtedly the greatest art dealer of his time—from 1904 to 1940 he almost single-handedly monopolized America's millionaire art-collecting market. But one prize plum eluded him: the industrialist Andrew Mellon. Before he died, Duveen was determined to make Mellon a client.

Duveen's friends said this was an impossible dream. Mellon was a stiff, taciturn man. The stories he had heard about the congenial, talkative Duveen rubbed him the wrong way—he had made it clear he had no desire to meet the man. Yet Duveen told his doubting friends, "Not only will Mellon buy from me but he will buy *only* from me." For several years he tracked his prey, learning the man's habits, tastes, phobias. To do this, he secretly put several of Mellon's staff on his own payroll, worming valuable information out of them. By the time he moved into action, he knew Mellon about as well as Mellon's wife did.

In 1921 Mellon was visiting London, and staying in a palatial suite on the third floor of Claridge's Hotel. Duveen booked himself into the suite just below Mellon's, on the second floor. He had arranged for his valet to befriend Mellon's valet, and on the fateful day he had chosen to make his move, Mellon's valet told Duveen's valet, who told Duveen, that he had just helped Mellon on with his overcoat, and that the industrialist was making his way down the corridor to ring for the lift.

Duveen's valet hurriedly helped Duveen with his own overcoat. Seconds later, Duveen entered the lift, and lo and behold, there was Mellon. "How do you do, Mr. Mellon?" said Duveen, introducing himself. "I am on my way to the National Gallery to look at some pictures." How uncanny—that was precisely where Mellon was headed. And so Duveen was able to accompany his prey to the one location that would ensure his success. He knew Mellon's taste inside and out, and while the two men wandered through the museum, he dazzled the magnate with his knowledge. Once again quite uncannily, they seemed to have remarkably similar tastes.

Mellon was pleasantly surprised: This was not the Duveen he had expected. The man was charming and agreeable, and clearly had exquisite taste. When they returned to New York, Mellon visited Duveen's exclusive gallery and fell in love with the collection. Everything, surprisingly enough, seemed to be precisely the kind of work he wanted to collect. For the rest of his life he was Duveen's best and most generous client.

Interpretation

A man as ambitious and competitive as Joseph Duveen left nothing to chance. What's the point of winging it, of just hoping you may be able to charm this or that client? It's like shooting ducks blindfolded. Arm yourself with a little knowledge and your aim improves.

Mellon was the most spectacular of Duveen's catches, but he spied on many a millionaire. By secretly putting members of his clients' household staffs on his own payroll, he would gain constant access to valuable infor-

mation about their masters' comings and goings, changes in taste, and other such tidbits of information that would put him a step ahead. A rival of Duveen's who wanted to make Henry Frick a client noticed that whenever he visited this wealthy New Yorker, Duveen was there before him, as if he had a sixth sense. To other dealers Duveen seemed to be everywhere, and to know everything before they did. His powers discouraged and disheartened them, until many simply gave up going after the wealthy clients who could make a dealer rich.

Such is the power of artful spying: It makes you seem all-powerful, clairvoyant. Your knowledge of your mark can also make you seem charming, so well can you anticipate his desires. No one sees the source of your power, and what they cannot see they cannot fight.

Rulers see through spies, as cows through smell, Brahmins through scriptures and the rest of the people through their normal eyes.
Kautilya, Indian philosopher, third century B.C.

KEYS TO POWER

In the realm of power, your goal is a degree of control over future events. Part of the problem you face, then, is that people won't tell you all their thoughts, emotions, and plans. Controlling what they say, they often keep the most critical parts of their character hidden—their weaknesses, ulterior motives, obsessions. The result is that you cannot predict their moves, and are constantly in the dark. The trick is to find a way to probe them, to find out their secrets and hidden intentions, without letting them know what you are up to.

This is not as difficult as you might think. A friendly front will let you secretly gather information on friends and enemies alike. Let others consult the horoscope, or read tarot cards: You have more concrete means of seeing into the future.

The most common way of spying is to use other people, as Duveen did. The method is simple, powerful, but risky: You will certainly gather information, but you have little control over the people who are doing the work. Perhaps they will ineptly reveal your spying, or even secretly turn against you. It is far better to be the spy yourself, to pose as a friend while secretly gathering information.

The French politician Talleyrand was one of the greatest practitioners of this art. He had an uncanny ability to worm secrets out of people in polite conversation. A contemporary of his, Baron de Vitrolles, wrote, "Wit and grace marked his conversation. He possessed the art of concealing his thoughts or his malice beneath a transparent veil of insinuations, words that imply something more than they express. Only when necessary did he inject his own personality." The key here is Talleyrand's ability to suppress himself in the conversation, to make others talk endlessly about themselves and inadvertently reveal their intentions and plans.

If you have reason to suspect that a person is telling you a lie, look as though you believed every word he said. This will give him courage to go on; he will become more vehement in his assertions, and in the end betray himself. Again, if you perceive that a person is trying to conceal something from you, but with only partial success, look as though you did not believe him. The opposition on your part will provoke him into leading out his reserve of truth and bringing the whole force of it to bear upon your incredulity.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, 1788–1860

Throughout Talleyrand's life, people said he was a superb conversationalist—yet he actually said very little. He never talked about his own ideas; he got others to reveal theirs. He would organize friendly games of charades for foreign diplomats, social gatherings where, however, he would carefully weigh their words, cajole confidences out of them, and gather information invaluable to his work as France's foreign minister. At the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) he did his spying in other ways: He would blurt out what seemed to be a secret (actually something he had made up), then watch his listeners' reactions. He might tell a gathering of diplomats, for instance, that a reliable source had revealed to him that the czar of Russia was planning to arrest his top general for treason. By watching the diplomats' reactions to this made-up story, he would know which ones were most excited by the weakening of the Russian army—perhaps their goverments had designs on Russia? As Baron von Stetten said, "Monsieur Talleyrand fires a pistol into the air to see who will jump out the window."

During social gatherings and innocuous encounters, pay attention. This is when people's guards are down. By suppressing your own personality, you can make them reveal things. The brilliance of the maneuver is that they will mistake your interest in them for friendship, so that you not only learn, you make allies.

Nevertheless, you should practice this tactic with caution and care. If people begin to suspect you are worming secrets out of them under the cover of conversation, they will strictly avoid you. Emphasize friendly chatter, not valuable information. Your search for gems of information cannot be too obvious, or your probing questions will reveal more about yourself and your intentions than about the information you hope to find.

A trick to try in spying comes from La Rochefoucauld, who wrote, "Sincerity is found in very few men, and is often the cleverest of ruses—one is sincere in order to draw out the confidence and secrets of the other." By pretending to bare your heart to another person, in other words, you make them more likely to reveal their own secrets. Give them a false confession and they will give you a real one. Another trick was identified by the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who suggested vehemently contradicting people you're in conversation with as a way of irritating them, stirring them up so that they lose some of the control over their words. In their emotional reaction they will reveal all kinds of truths about themselves, truths you can later use against them.

Another method of indirect spying is to test people, to lay little traps that make them reveal things about themselves. Chosroes II, a notoriously clever seventh-century king of the Persians, had many ways of seeing through his subjects without raising suspicion. If he noticed, for instance, that two of his courtiers had become particularly friendly, he would call one of them aside and say he had information that the other was a traitor, and would soon be killed. The king would tell the courtier he trusted him more than anyone, and that he must keep this information secret. Then he

would watch the two men carefully. If he saw that the second courtier had not changed in his behavior toward the king, he would conclude that the first courtier had kept the secret, and he would quickly promote the man, later taking him aside to confess, "I meant to kill your friend because of certain information that had reached me, but, when I investigated the matter, I found it was untrue." If, on the other hand, the second courtier started to avoid the king, acting aloof and tense, Chosroes would know that the secret had been revealed. He would ban the second courtier from his court, letting him know that the whole business had only been a test, but that even though the man had done nothing wrong, he could no longer trust him. The first courtier, however, had revealed a secret, and him Chosroes would ban from his entire kingdom.

It may seem an odd form of spying that reveals not empirical information but a person's character. Often, however, it is the best way of solving problems before they arise.

By tempting people into certain acts, you learn about their loyalty, their honesty, and so on. And this kind of knowledge is often the most valuable of all: Armed with it, you can predict their actions in the future.

Image:
The Third Eye of
the Spy. In the land of
the two-eyed, the third eye
gives you the omniscience
of a god. You see further than
others, and you see deeper
into them. Nobody is
safe from the eye
but you.

Authority: Now, the reason a brilliant sovereign and a wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move, and their achievements surpass those of ordinary men, is their foreknowledge of the enemy situation. This "foreknowledge" cannot be elicited from spirits, nor from gods, nor by analogy with past events, nor by astrologic calculations. It must be obtained from men who know the enemy situation—from spies. (Sun-tzu, *The Art of War,* fourth century B.C.)

REVERSAL

Information is critical to power, but just as you spy on other people, you must be prepared for them to spy on you. One of the most potent weapons in the battle for information, then, is giving out false information. As Winston Churchill said, "Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." You must surround yourself with such a bodyguard, so that your truth cannot be penetrated. By planting the information of your choice, you control the game.

In 1944 the Nazis' rocket-bomb attacks on London suddenly escalated. Over two thousand V-1 flying bombs fell on the city, killing more than five thousand people and wounding many more. Somehow, however, the Germans consistently missed their targets. Bombs that were intended for Tower Bridge, or Piccadilly, would fall well short of the city, landing in the less populated suburbs. This was because, in fixing their targets, the Germans relied on secret agents they had planted in England. They did not know that these agents had been discovered, and that in their place, English-controlled agents were feeding them subtly deceptive information.

The bombs would hit farther and farther from their targets every time they fell. By the end of the campaign they were landing on cows in the country. By feeding people wrong information, then, you gain a potent advantage. While spying gives you a third eye, disinformation puts out one of your enemy's eyes. A cyclops, he always misses his target.

LAW

15

CRUSH YOUR ENEMY TOTALLY

JUDGMENT

All great leaders since Moses have known that a feared enemy must be crushed completely. (Sometimes they have learned this the hard way.) If one ember is left alight, no matter how dimly it smolders, a fire will eventually break out. More is lost through stopping halfway than through total annihilation: The enemy will recover, and will seek revenge. Crush him, not only in body but in spirit.

TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

The remnants of an enemy can become active like those of a disease or fire. Hence, these should be exterminated completely. . . . One should never ignore an enemy, knowing him to be weak. He becomes dangerous in due course, like the spark of fire in a haystack.

KAUTILYA, INDIAN PHILOSOPHER, THIRD CENTURY B.C.

No rivalry between leaders is more celebrated in Chinese history than the struggle between Hsiang Yu and Liu Pang. These two generals began their careers as friends, fighting on the same side. Hsiang Yu came from the nobility; large and powerful, given to bouts of violence and temper, a bit dull-witted, he was yet a mighty warrior who always fought at the head of his troops. Liu Pang came from peasant stock. He had never been much of a soldier, and preferred women and wine to fighting; in fact, he was something of a scoundrel. But he was wily, and he had the ability to recognize the best strategists, keep them as his advisers, and listen to their advice. He had risen in the army through these strengths.

In 208 B.C., the king of Ch'u sent two massive armies to conquer the powerful kingdom of Ch'in. One army went north, under the generalship of Sung Yi, with Hsiang Yu second in command; the other, led by Liu Pang, headed straight toward Ch'in. The target was the kingdom's splendid capital, Hsien-yang. And Hsiang Yu, ever violent and impatient, could not stand the idea that Liu Pang would get to Hsien-yang first, and perhaps would assume command of the entire army.

At one point on the northern front, Hsiang's commander, Sung Yi, hesitated in sending his troops into battle. Furious, Hsiang entered Sung Yi's tent, proclaimed him a traitor, cut off his head, and assumed sole command of the army. Without waiting for orders, he left the northern front and marched directly on Hsien-yang. He felt certain he was the better soldier and general than Liu, but, to his utter astonishment, his rival, leading a smaller, swifter army, managed to reach Hsien-yang first. Hsiang had an adviser, Fan Tseng, who warned him, "This village headman [Liu Pang] used to be greedy only for riches and women, but since entering the capital he has not been led astray by wealth, wine, or sex. That shows he is aiming high."

Fan Tseng urged Hsiang to kill his rival before it was too late. He told the general to invite the wily peasant to a banquet at their camp outside Hsien-yang, and, in the midst of a celebratory sword dance, to have his head cut off. The invitation was sent; Liu fell for the trap, and came to the banquet. But Hsiang hesitated in ordering the sword dance, and by the time he gave the signal, Liu had sensed a trap, and managed to escape. "Bah!" cried Fan Tseng in disgust, seeing that Hsiang had botched the plot. "One cannot plan with a simpleton. Liu Pang will steal your empire yet and make us all his prisoners."

Realizing his mistake, Hsiang hurriedly marched on Hsien-yang, this time determined to hack off his rival's head. Liu was never one to fight when the odds were against him, and he abandoned the city. Hsiang captured Hsien-yang, murdered the young prince of Ch'in, and burned the city to the ground. Liu was now Hsiang's bitter enemy, and he pursued him for many months, finally cornering him in a walled city. Lacking food, his army in disarray, Liu sued for peace.

Again Fan Tseng warned Hsiang, "Crush him now! If you let him go

THE TRAP AT SINIGAGLIA

On the day Ramiro was executed, Cesare [Borgia] quit Cesena, leaving the mutilated body on the town square, and marched south. Three days later he arrived at Fano, where he received the envoys of the city of Ancona, who assured him of their loyalty. A messenger from Vitellozzo Vitelli announced that the little Adriatic port of Sinigaglia had surrendered to the condottieri *[mercenary soldiers]. Only the citadel, in charge of the Genoese Andrea Doria, still held out, and Doria refused to hand it over to anyone except Cesare himself. [Borgia] sent word that he would arrive the next day, which was just what the*

again, you will be sorry later." But Hsiang decided to be merciful. He wanted to bring Liu back to Ch'u alive, and to force his former friend to acknowledge him as master. But Fan proved right: Liu managed to use the negotiations for his surrender as a distraction, and he escaped with a small army. Hsiang, amazed that he had yet again let his rival slip away, once more set out after Liu, this time with such ferocity that he seemed to have lost his mind. At one point, having captured Liu's father in battle, Hsiang stood the old man up during the fighting and yelled to Liu across the line of troops, "Surrender now, or I shall boil your father alive!" Liu calmly answered, "But we are sworn brothers. So my father is your father also. If you insist on boiling your own father, send me a bowl of the soup!" Hsiang backed down, and the struggle continued.

A few weeks later, in the thick of the hunt, Hsiang scattered his forces unwisely, and in a surprise attack Liu was able to surround his main garrison. For the first time the tables were turned. Now it was Hsiang who sued for peace. Liu's top adviser urged him to destroy Hsiang, crush his army, show no mercy. "To let him go would be like rearing a tiger—it will devour you later," the adviser said. Liu agreed.

Making a false treaty, he lured Hsiang into relaxing his defense, then slaughtered almost all of his army. Hsiang managed to escape. Alone and on foot, knowing that Liu had put a bounty on his head, he came upon a small group of his own retreating soldiers, and cried out, "I hear Liu Pang has offered one thousand pieces of gold and a fief of ten thousand families for my head. Let me do you a favor." Then he slit his own throat and died.

Interpretation

Hsiang Yu had proven his ruthlessness on many an occasion. He rarely hesitated in doing away with a rival if it served his purposes. But with Liu Pang he acted differently. He respected his rival, and did not want to defeat him through deception; he wanted to prove his superiority on the battlefield, even to force the clever Liu to surrender and to serve him. Every time he had his rival in his hands, something made him hesitate—a fatal sympathy with or respect for the man who, after all, had once been a friend and comrade in arms. But the moment Hsiang made it clear that he intended to do away with Liu, yet failed to accomplish it, he sealed his own doom. Liu would not suffer the same hesitation once the tables were turned.

This is the fate that faces all of us when we sympathize with our enemies, when pity, or the hope of reconciliation, makes us pull back from doing away with them. We only strengthen their fear and hatred of us. We have beaten them, and they are humiliated; yet we nurture these resentful vipers who will one day kill us. Power cannot be dealt with this way. It must be exterminated, crushed, and denied the chance to return to haunt us. This is all the truer with a former friend who has become an enemy. The law governing fatal antagonisms reads: Reconciliation is out of the question. Only one side can win, and it must win totally.

Liu Pang learned this lesson well. After defeating Hsiang Yu, this son

condottieri *wanted to hear. Once he reached Sinigaglia, Cesare would be an easy prey, caught between the citadel and their forces ringing the town. . . . The* condottieri *were sure they had military superiority, believing that the departure of the French troops had left Cesare with only a small force. In fact, according to Machiavelli, [Borgia] had left Cesena with ten thousand infantrymen and three thousand horse, taking pains to split up his men so that they would march along parallel routes before converging on Sinigaglia. The reason for such a large force was that he knew, from a confession extracted from Ramiro de Lorca, what the* condottieri *had up their sleeve. He therefore decided to turn their own trap against them. This was the masterpiece of trickery that the historian Paolo Giovio later called "the magnificent deceit." At dawn on December 31 [1502], Cesare reached the outskirts of Sinigaglia. . . . Led by Michelotto Corella, Cesare's advance guard of two hundred lances took up its position on the canal bridge. . . . This control of the bridge effectively prevented the conspirators' troops from withdrawing. . . . Cesare greeted the* condottieri *effusively and invited them to join him. . . . Michelotto*

of a farmer went on to become supreme commander of the armies of Ch'u. Crushing his next rival—the king of Ch'u, his own former leader—he crowned himself emperor, defeated everyone in his path, and went down in history as one of the greatest rulers of China, the immortal Han Kao-tsu, founder of the Han Dynasty.

Those who seek to achieve things should show no mercy.
Kautilya, Indian philosopher, third century B.C.

had prepared the Palazzo Bernardino for Cesare's use, and the duke invited the condottieri *inside. . . . Once indoors the men were quietly arrested by guards who crept up from the rear. . . . [Cesare] gave orders for an attack on Vitelli's and Orsini's soldiers in the outlying areas. . . . That night, while their troops were being crushed, Michelotto throttled Oliveretto and Vitelli in the Bernardino palace. . . . At one fell swoop, [Borgia] had got rid of his former generals and worst enemies.*

THE BORGIAS, IVAN CLOULAS, 1989

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Wu Chao, born in A.D. 625, was the daughter of a duke, and as a beautiful young woman of many charms, she was accordingly attached to the harem of Emperor T'ai Tsung.

The imperial harem was a dangerous place, full of young concubines vying to become the emperor's favorite. Wu's beauty and forceful character quickly won her this battle, but, knowing that an emperor, like other powerful men, is a creature of whim, and that she could easily be replaced, she kept her eye on the future.

Wu managed to seduce the emperor's dissolute son, Kao Tsung, on the only possible occasion when she could find him alone: while he was relieving himself at the royal urinal. Even so, when the emperor died and Kao Tsung took over the throne, she still suffered the fate to which all wives and concubines of a deceased emperor were bound by tradition and law: Her head shaven, she entered a convent, for what was supposed to be the rest of her life. For seven years Wu schemed to escape. By communicating in secret with the new emperor, and by befriending his wife, the empress, she managed to get a highly unusual royal edict allowing her to return to the palace and to the royal harem. Once there, she fawned on the empress, while still sleeping with the emperor. The empress did not discourage this—she had yet to provide the emperor with an heir, her position was vulnerable, and Wu was a valuable ally.

To have ultimate victory, you must be ruthless.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, 1769–1821

In 654 Wu Chao gave birth to a child. One day the empress came to visit, and as soon as she had left, Wu smothered the newborn—her own baby. When the murder was discovered, suspicion immediately fell on the empress, who had been on the scene moments earlier, and whose jealous nature was known by all. This was precisely Wu's plan. Shortly thereafter, the empress was charged with murder and executed. Wu Chao was crowned empress in her place. Her new husband, addicted to his life of pleasure, gladly gave up the reins of government to Wu Chao, who was from then on known as Empress Wu.

Although now in a position of great power, Wu hardly felt secure. There were enemies everywhere; she could not let down her guard for one moment. Indeed, when she was forty-one, she began to fear that her beautiful young niece was becoming the emperor's favorite. She poisoned the woman with a clay mixed into her food. In 675 her own son, touted as the

heir apparent, was poisoned as well. The next-eldest son—illegitimate, but now the crown prince—was exiled a little later on trumped-up charges. And when the emperor died, in 683, Wu managed to have the son after that declared unfit for the throne. All this meant that it was her youngest, most ineffectual son who finally became emperor. In this way she continued to rule.

Over the next five years there were innumerable palace coups. All of them failed, and all of the conspirators were executed. By 688 there was no one left to challenge Wu. She proclaimed herself a divine descendant of Buddha, and in 690 her wishes were finally granted: She was named Holy and Divine "Emperor" of China.

Wu became emperor because there was literally nobody left from the previous T'ang dynasty. And so she ruled unchallenged, for over a decade of relative peace. In 705, at the age of eighty, she was forced to abdicate.

Interpretation

All who knew Empress Wu remarked on her energy and intelligence. At the time, there was no glory available for an ambitious woman beyond a few years in the imperial harem, then a lifetime walled up in a convent. In Wu's gradual but remarkable rise to the top, she was never naive. She knew that any hesitation, any momentary weakness, would spell her end. If, every time she got rid of a rival a new one appeared, the solution was simple: She had to crush them all or be killed herself. Other emperors before her had followed the same path to the top, but Wu—who, as a woman, had next to no chance to gain power—had to be more ruthless still.

Empress Wu's forty-year reign was one of the longest in Chinese history. Although the story of her bloody rise to power is well known, in China she is considered one of the period's most able and effective rulers.

A priest asked the dying Spanish statesman and general Ramón María Narváez (1800–1868), "Does your Excellency forgive all your enemies?" "I do not have to forgive my enemies," answered Narváez, "I have had them all shot."

KEYS TO POWER

It is no accident that the two stories illustrating this law come from China: Chinese history abounds with examples of enemies who were left alive and returned to haunt the lenient. "Crush the enemy" is a key strategic tenet of Sun-tzu, the fourth-century-B.C. author of *The Art of War.* The idea is simple: Your enemies wish you ill. There is nothing they want more than to eliminate you. If, in your struggles with them, you stop halfway or even three quarters of the way, out of mercy or hope of reconciliation, you only make them more determined, more embittered, and they will someday take revenge. They may act friendly for the time being, but this is only because you have defeated them. They have no choice but to bide their time.

The solution: Have no mercy. Crush your enemies as totally as they

would crush you. Ultimately the only peace and security you can hope for from your enemies is their disappearance.

Mao Tse-tung, a devoted reader of Sun-tzu and of Chinese history generally, knew the importance of this law. In 1934 the Communist leader and some 75,000 poorly equipped soldiers fled into the desolate mountains of western China to escape Chiang Kai-shek's much larger army, in what has since been called the Long March.

Chiang was determined to eliminate every last Communist, and by a few years later Mao had less than 10,000 soldiers left. By 1937, in fact, when China was invaded by Japan, Chiang calculated that the Communists were no longer a threat. He chose to give up the chase and concentrate on the Japanese. Ten years later the Communists had recovered enough to rout Chiang's army. Chiang had forgotten the ancient wisdom of crushing the enemy; Mao had not. Chiang was pursued until he and his entire army fled to the island of Taiwan. Nothing remains of his regime in mainland China to this day.

The wisdom behind "crushing the enemy" is as ancient as the Bible: Its first practitioner may have been Moses, who learned it from God Himself, when He parted the Red Sea for the Jews, then let the water flow back over the pursuing Egyptians so that "not so much as one of them remained." When Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments and found his people worshipping the Golden Calf, he had every last offender slaughtered. And just before he died, he told his followers, finally about to enter the Promised Land, that when they had defeated the tribes of Canaan they should "utterly destroy them . . . make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them."

The goal of total victory is an axiom of modern warfare, and was codified as such by Carl von Clausewitz, the premier philosopher of war. Analyzing the campaigns of Napoleon, von Clausewitz wrote, "We do claim that direct annihilation of the enemy's forces must always be the *dominant consideration*. . . . Once a major victory is achieved there must be no talk of rest, of breathing space . . . but only of the pursuit, going for the enemy again, seizing his capital, attacking his reserves and anything else that might give his country aid and comfort." The reason for this is that after war come negotiation and the division of territory. If you have only won a partial victory, you will inevitably lose in negotiation what you have gained by war.

The solution is simple: Allow your enemies no options. Annihilate them and their territory is yours to carve. The goal of power is to control your enemies completely, to make them obey your will. You cannot afford to go halfway. If they have no options, they will be forced to do your bidding. This law has applications far beyond the battlefield. Negotiation is the insidious viper that will eat away at your victory, so give your enemies nothing to negotiate, no hope, no room to maneuver. They are crushed and that is that.

Realize this: In your struggle for power you will stir up rivalries and

create enemies. There will be people you cannot win over, who will remain your enemies no matter what. But whatever wound you inflicted on them, deliberately or not, do not take their hatred personally. Just recognize that there is no possibility of peace between you, especially as long as you stay in power. If you let them stick around, they will seek revenge, as certainly as night follows day. To wait for them to show their cards is just silly; as Empress Wu understood, by then it will be too late.

Be realistic: With an enemy like this around, you will never be secure. Remember the lessons of history, and the wisdom of Moses and Mao: Never go halfway.

It is not, of course, a question of murder, it is a question of banishment. Sufficiently weakened and then exiled from your court forever, your enemies are rendered harmless. They have no hope of recovering, insinuating themselves and hurting you. And if they cannot be banished, at least understand that they are plotting against you, and pay no heed to whatever friendliness they feign. Your only weapon in such a situation is your own wariness. If you cannot banish them immediately, then plot for the best time to act.

Image: A Viper crushed beneath your foot but left alive, will rear up and bite you with a double dose of venom. An enemy that is left around is like a half-dead viper that you nurse back to health. Time makes the venom grow stronger.

Authority: For it must be noted, that men must either be caressed or else annihilated; they will revenge themselves for small injuries, but cannot do so for great ones; the injury therefore that we do to a man must be such that we need not fear his vengeance. (Niccolò Machiavelli, 1469–1527)

REVERSAL

This law should very rarely be ignored, but it does sometimes happen that it is better to let your enemies destroy themselves, if such a thing is possible, than to make them suffer by your hand. In warfare, for example, a good general knows that if he attacks an army when it is cornered, its soldiers will fight much more fiercely. It is sometimes better, then, to leave them an escape route, a way out. As they retreat, they wear themselves out, and are ultimately more demoralized by the retreat than by any defeat he might inflict on the battlefield. When you have someone on the ropes, then—but only when you are sure they have no chance of recovery—you might let them hang themselves. Let them be the agents of their own destruction. The result will be the same, and you won't feel half as bad.

Finally, sometimes by crushing an enemy, you embitter them so much that they spend years and years plotting revenge. The Treaty of Versailles had such an effect on the Germans. Some would argue that in the long run it would be better to show some leniency. The problem is, your leniency involves another risk—it may embolden the enemy, which still harbors a grudge, but now has some room to operate. It is almost always wiser to crush your enemy. If they plot revenge years later, do not let your guard down, but simply crush them again.

LAW

16

USE ABSENCE TO INCREASE RESPECT AND HONOR

JUDGMENT

Too much circulation makes the price go down: The more you are seen and heard from, the more common you appear. If you are already established in a group, temporary withdrawal from it will make you more talked about, even more admired. You must learn when to leave. Create value through scarcity.

THE CAMEL AND THE FLOATING STICKS

The first man who saw
a camel fled;
The second ventured
within distance;
The third dared slip a
halter round its head.
Familiarity in this
existence
Makes all things tame,
for what may seem
Terrible or bizarre,
when once our eyes
Have had time to
acclimatize,
Becomes quite
commonplace. Since
I'm on this theme,
I've heard of sentinels
posted by the shore
Who, spotting some-
thing far-away afloat,
Couldn't resist
the shout:
"A sail! A sail!
A mighty man-of-war!"
Five minutes later it's
a packet boat,
And then a skiff, and
then a bale,
And finally some sticks
bobbing about.
I know of plenty such
To whom this story
applies—
People whom distance
magnifies,
Who, close to, don't
amount to much.

SELECTED FABLES, JEAN DE LA FONTAINE, 1621–1695

TRANSGRESSION AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

Sir Guillaume de Balaun was a troubadour who roamed the South of France in the Middle Ages, going from castle to castle, reciting poetry, and playing the perfect knight. At the castle of Javiac he met and fell in love with the beautiful lady of the house, Madame Guillelma de Javiac. He sang her his songs, recited his poetry, played chess with her, and little by little she in turn fell in love with him. Guillaume had a friend, Sir Pierre de Barjac, who traveled with him and who was also received at the castle. And Pierre too fell in love with a lady in Javiac, the gracious but temperamental Viernetta.

Then one day Pierre and Viernetta had a violent quarrel. The lady dismissed him, and he sought out his friend Guillaume to help heal the breach and get him back in her good graces. Guillaume was about to leave the castle for a while, but on his return, several weeks later, he worked his magic, and Pierre and the lady were reconciled. Pierre felt that his love had increased tenfold—that there was no stronger love, in fact, than the love that follows reconciliation. The stronger and longer the disagreement, he told Guillaume, the sweeter the feeling that comes with peace and rapprochement.

As a troubadour, Sir Guillaume prided himself on experiencing all the joys and sorrows of love. On hearing his friend's talk, he too wanted know the bliss of reconciliation after a quarrel. He therefore feigned great anger with Lady Guillelma, stopped sending her love letters, and abruptly left the castle and stayed away, even during the festivals and hunts. This drove the young lady wild.

Guillelma sent messengers to Guillaume to find out what had happened, but he turned the messengers away. He thought all this would make her angry, forcing him to plead for reconciliation as Pierre had. Instead, however, his absence had the opposite effect: It made Guillelma love him all the more. Now the lady pursued her knight, sending messengers and love notes of her own. This was almost unheard of—a lady never pursued her troubadour. And Guillaume did not like it. Guillelma's forwardness made him feel she had lost some of her dignity. Not only was he no longer sure of his plan, he was no longer sure of his lady.

Finally, after several months of not hearing from Guillaume, Guillelma gave up. She sent him no more messengers, and he began to wonder—perhaps she was angry? Perhaps the plan had worked after all? So much the better if she was. He would wait no more—it was time to reconcile. So he put on his best robe, decked the horse in its fanciest caparison, chose a magnificent helmet, and rode off to Javiac.

On hearing that her beloved had returned, Guillelma rushed to see him, knelt before him, dropped her veil to kiss him, and begged forgiveness for whatever slight had caused his anger. Imagine his confusion and despair—his plan had failed abysmally. She was not angry, she had never been angry, she was only deeper in love, and he would never experience the joy of reconciliation after a quarrel. Seeing her now, and still desperate

to taste that joy, he decided to try one more time: He drove her away with harsh words and threatening gestures. She left, this time vowing never to see him again.

The next morning the troubadour regretted what he had done. He rode back to Javiac, but the lady would not receive him, and ordered her servants to chase him away, across the drawbridge and over the hill. Guillaume fled. Back in his chamber he collapsed and started to cry: He had made a terrible mistake. Over the next year, unable to see his lady, he experienced the absence, the terrible absence, that can only inflame love. He wrote one of his most beautiful poems, "My song ascends for mercy praying." And he sent many letters to Guillelma, explaining what he had done, and begging forgiveness.

After a great deal of this, Lady Guillelma, remembering his beautiful songs, his handsome figure, and his skills in dancing and falconry, found herself yearning to have him back. As penance for his cruelty, she ordered him to remove the nail from the little finger of his right hand, and to send it to her along with a poem describing his miseries.

He did as she asked. Finally Guillaume de Balaun was able to taste the ultimate sensation—a reconciliation even surpassing that of his friend Pierre.

Interpretation

Trying to discover the joys of reconciliation, Guillaume de Balaun inadvertently experienced the truth of the law of absence and presence. At the start of an affair, you need to heighten your presence in the eyes of the other. If you absent yourself too early, you may be forgotten. But once your lover's emotions are engaged, and the feeling of love has crystallized, absence inflames and excites. Giving no reason for your absence excites even more: The other person assumes he or she is at fault. While you are away, the lover's imagination takes flight, and a stimulated imagination cannot help but make love grow stronger. Conversely, the more Guillelma pursued Guillaume, the less he loved her—she had become too present, too accessible, leaving no room for *his* imagination and fancy, so that his feelings were suffocating. When she finally stopped sending messengers, he was able to breathe again, and to return to his plan.

What withdraws, what becomes scarce, suddenly seems to deserve our respect and honor. What stays too long, inundating us with its presence, makes us disdain it. In the Middle Ages, ladies were constantly putting their knights through trials of love, sending them on some long and arduous quest—all to create a pattern of absence and presence. Indeed, had Guillaume not left his lady in the first place, she might have been forced to send him away, creating an absence of her own.

Absence diminishes minor passions and inflames great ones,
as the wind douses a candle and fans a fire.
La Rochefoucauld, 1613–1680

FIVE VIRTUES OF THE COCK

While serving under the Duke Ai of Lu, T'ien Jao, resenting his obscure position, said to his master, "I am going to wander far away like a snow goose."
"What do you mean by that?" inquired the Duke.
"Do you see the cock?" said T'ien Jao in reply. "Its crest is a symbol of civility; its powerful talons suggest strength; its daring to fight any enemy denotes courage; its instinct to invite others whenever food is obtained shows benevolence; and, last but not least, its punctuality in keeping the time through the night gives us an example of veracity. In spite, however, of these five virtues, the cock is daily killed to fill a dish on your table. Why? The reason is that it is found within our reach. On the other hand, the snow goose traverses in one flight a thousand li. Resting in your garden, it preys on your fishes and turtles and pecks your millet. Though devoid of any of the cock's five virtues, yet you prize this bird for the sake of its scarcity. This being so, I shall fly far like a snow goose."

ANCIENT CHINESE PARABLES, YU HSIU SEN, ED., 1974

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

For many centuries the Assyrians ruled upper Asia with an iron fist. In the eighth century B.C., however, the people of Medea (now northwestern Iran) revolted against them, and finally broke free. Now the Medes had to establish a new government. Determined to avoid any form of despotism, they refused to give ultimate power to any one man, or to establish a monarchy. Without a leader, however, the country soon fell into chaos, and fractured into small kingdoms, with village fighting against village.

In one such village lived a man named Deioces, who began to make a name for himself for fair dealing and the ability to settle disputes.

He did this so successfully, in fact, that soon any legal conflict in the area was brought to him, and his power increased. Throughout the land, the law had fallen into disrepute—the judges were corrupt, and no one entrusted their cases to the courts any more, resorting to violence instead. When news spread of Deioces' wisdom, incorruptibility, and unshakable impartiality, Medean villages far and wide turned to him to settle all manner of cases. Soon he became the sole arbiter of justice in the land.

At the height of his power, Deioces suddenly decided he had had enough. He would no longer sit in the chair of judgment, would hear no more suits, settle no more disputes between brother and brother, village and village. Complaining that he was spending so much time dealing with other people's problems that he had neglected his own affairs, he retired. The country once again descended into chaos. With the sudden withdrawal of a powerful arbiter like Deioces, crime increased, and contempt for the law was never greater. The Medes held a meeting of all the villages to decide how to get out of their predicament. "We cannot continue to live in this country under these conditions," said one tribal leader. "Let us appoint one of our number to rule so that we can live under orderly government, rather than losing our homes altogether in the present chaos."

And so, despite all that the Medes had suffered under the Assyrian despotism, they decided to set up a monarchy and name a king. And the man they most wanted to rule, of course, was the fair-minded Deioces. He was hard to convince, for he wanted nothing more to do with the villages' infighting and bickering, but the Medes begged and pleaded—without him the country had descended into a state of lawlessness. Deioces finally agreed.

Yet he also imposed conditions. An enormous palace was to be constructed for him, he was to be provided with bodyguards, and a capital city was to be built from which he could rule. All of this was done, and Deioces settled into his palace. In the center of the capital, the palace was surrounded by walls, and completely inaccessible to ordinary people. Deioces then established the terms of his rule: Admission to his presence was forbidden. Communication with the king was only possible through messengers. No one in the royal court could see him more than once a week, and then only by permission.

Deioces ruled for fifty-three years, extended the Medean empire, and established the foundation for what would later be the Persian empire, under his great-great-grandson Cyrus. During Deioces' reign, the people's

respect for him gradually turned into a form of worship: He was not a mere mortal, they believed, but the son of a god.

Interpretation

Deioces was a man of great ambition. He determined early on that the country needed a strong ruler, and that he was the man for the job.

In a land plagued with anarchy, the most powerful man is the judge and arbiter. So Deioces began his career by making his reputation as a man of impeccable fairness.

At the height of his power as a judge, however, Deioces realized the truth of the law of absence and presence: By serving so many clients, he had become too noticeable, too available, and had lost the respect he had earlier enjoyed. People were taking his services for granted. The only way to regain the veneration and power he wanted was to withdraw completely, and let the Medes taste what life was like without him. As he expected, they came begging for him to rule.

Once Deioces had discovered the truth of this law, he carried it to its ultimate realization. In the palace his people had built for him, none could see him except a few courtiers, and those only rarely. As Herodotus wrote, "There was a risk that if they saw him habitually, it might lead to jealousy and resentment, and plots would follow; but if nobody saw him, the legend would grow that he was a being of a different order from mere men."

A man said to a Dervish: "Why do I not see you more often?" The Dervish replied, "Because the words 'Why have you not been to see me?' are sweeter to my ear than the words 'Why have you come again?'"

Mulla Jami, quoted in Idries Shah's Caravan of Dreams, *1968*

KEYS TO POWER

Everything in the world depends on absence and presence. A strong presence will draw power and attention to you—you shine more brightly than those around you. But a point is inevitably reached where too much presence creates the opposite effect: The more you are seen and heard from, the more your value degrades. You become a habit. No matter how hard you try to be different, subtly, without your knowing why, people respect you less and less. At the right moment you must learn to withdraw yourself before they unconsciously push you away. It is a game of hide-and-seek.

The truth of this law can most easily be appreciated in matters of love and seduction. In the beginning stages of an affair, the lover's absence stimulates your imagination, forming a sort of aura around him or her. But this aura fades when you know too much—when your imagination no longer has room to roam. The loved one becomes a person like anyone else, a person whose presence is taken for granted. This is why the seventeenth-century French courtesan Ninon de Lenclos advised constant feints at withdrawal from one's lover. "Love never dies of starvation," she wrote, "but often of indigestion."

The moment you allow yourself to be treated like anyone else, it is too late—you are swallowed and digested. To prevent this you need to starve the other person of your presence. Force their respect by threatening them with the possibility that they will lose you for good; create a pattern of presence and absence.

Once you die, everything about you will seem different. You will be surrounded by an instant aura of respect. People will remember their criticisms of you, their arguments with you, and will be filled with regret and guilt. They are missing a presence that will never return. But you do not have to wait until you die: By completely withdrawing for a while, you create a kind of death before death. And when you come back, it will be as if you had come back from the dead—an air of resurrection will cling to you, and people will be relieved at your return. This is how Deioces made himself king.

Napoleon was recognizing the law of absence and presence when he said, "If I am often seen at the theater, people will cease to notice me." Today, in a world inundated with presence through the flood of images, the game of withdrawal is all the more powerful. We rarely know when to withdraw anymore, and nothing seems private, so we are awed by anyone who is able to disappear by choice. Novelists J. D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon have created cultlike followings by knowing when to disappear.

Another, more everyday side of this law, but one that demonstrates its truth even further, is the law of scarcity in the science of economics. By withdrawing something from the market, you create instant value. In seventeenth-century Holland, the upper classes wanted to make the tulip more than just a beautiful flower—they wanted it to be a kind of status symbol. Making the flower scarce, indeed almost impossible to obtain, they sparked what was later called tulipomania. A single flower was now worth more than its weight in gold. In our own century, similarly, the art dealer Joseph Duveen insisted on making the paintings he sold as scarce and rare as possible. To keep their prices elevated and their status high, he bought up whole collections and stored them in his basement. The paintings that he sold became more than just paintings—they were fetish objects, their value increased by their rarity. "You can get all the pictures you want at fifty thousand dollars apiece—that's easy," he once said. "But to get pictures at a quarter of a million apiece—that wants doing!"

I m a g e:
The Sun. It can only be
appreciated by its absence.
The longer the days of rain, the
more the sun is craved. But too many
hot days and the sun overwhelms.
Learn to keep yourself obscure and
make people demand your return.

Extend the law of scarcity to your own skills. Make what you are offering the world rare and hard to find, and you instantly increase its value.

There always comes a moment when those in power overstay their welcome. We have grown tired of them, lost respect for them; we see them as no different from the rest of mankind, which is to say that we see them as rather worse, since we inevitably compare their current status in our eyes to their former one. There is an art to knowing when to retire. If it is done right, you regain the respect you had lost, and retain a part of your power.

The greatest ruler of the sixteenth century was Charles V. King of Spain, Hapsburg emperor, he governed an empire that at one point included much of Europe and the New World. Yet at the height of his power, in 1557, he retired to the monastery of Yuste. All of Europe was captivated by his sudden withdrawal; people who had hated and feared him suddenly called him great, and he came to be seen as a saint. In more recent times, the film actress Greta Garbo was never more admired than when she retired, in 1941. For some her absence came too soon—she was in her mid-thirties—but she wisely preferred to leave on her own terms, rather than waiting for her audience to grow tired of her.

Make yourself too available and the aura of power you have created around yourself will wear away. Turn the game around: Make yourself less accessible and you increase the value of your presence.

Authority:
Use absence to create
respect and esteem. If presence
diminishes fame, absence augments it.
A man who when absent is regarded as a
lion becomes when present something common and ridiculous. Talents lose their luster
if we become too familiar with them, for the
outer shell of the mind is more readily seen
than its rich inner kernel. Even the outstanding genius makes use of retirement so that
men may honor him and so that the
yearning aroused by his absence
may cause him to be esteemed.
(Baltasar Gracián,
1601–1658)

REVERSAL

This law only applies once a certain level of power has been attained. The need to withdraw only comes after you have established your presence; leave too early and you do not increase your respect, you are simply forgotten. When you are first entering onto the world's stage, create an image that is recognizable, reproducible, and is seen everywhere. Until that status is attained, absence is dangerous—instead of fanning the flames, it will extinguish them.

In love and seduction, similarly, absence is only effective once you have surrounded the other with your image, been seen by him or her everywhere. Everything must remind your lover of your presence, so that when you do choose to be away, the lover will always be thinking of you, will always be seeing you in his or her mind's eye.

Remember: In the beginning, make yourself not scarce but omnipresent. Only what is seen, appreciated, and loved will be missed in its absence.